

Whose Name We Share

History

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Foreword

I applaud Gunner Hemi Croft for authoring *Whose Name We Share*, the story of the batteries that have carried the “103” title since the first battery – 103 Field (Howitzer) Battery – was raised on 6 March 1916 at Tel e Kebir in the shadow of the Sphinx, with the Sphinx remaining a proud feature of the Battery’s plaque to this day.

This is a history worth telling with the Battery being involved in some of the most important artillery battles and developments over the last 107 years. These batteries have served with distinction from the Western Front in France where the battery participated all the major Australian actions, time as an anti-aircraft battery in the 1950s, to the Malayan Emergency and Vietnam where amongst many great deeds they were one of the batteries that provided lifesaving fire support at the Battel of Long Tan, to the 1980s and 1990s when it was Army’s only 155mm ‘Medium’ battery (1987-1999).

The battery was dual equipped for decades until 1998 with combinations of the 5.5 inch then M198 Howitzer, and the M2A2 then Hamel Field Guns to fulfil both its operational role supporting the units of 1 Brigade, as well as provide support to the School of Artillery. At one stage the Battery was ‘triple equipped’ with the 4.2 inch mortar. In East Timor the Battery Commander, all Forward Observer parties, and many gunline and logistics personnel deployed with the 5/7 RAR Battalion Group becoming the first RAA force element to be assigned to the UN and wear the UN Blue Beret when the mission transferred from INTERFET to UNTAET. Since then, the Battery has deployed to the Solomon Islands and provided formed sub-elements and individuals to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere across the globe and within Australia. “Whose Name We Share” describes all this and more.

Most importantly throughout its various incarnations the Battery has been served by dedicated, resourceful and professional men

and women, who have achieved amazing things on operations and in peace, built a proud Battery identity and forged friendships that have endured well after 'end of mission'. These Gunners to this day continue to build on the legacy of those that went before them and enhance the "103" reputation.

On a personal level I have a deep affection for 103 Battery, having joined the battery as a newly commissioned Lieutenant Section Commander and then Gun Position Officer in my first artillery appointment. The two highlights of this time were months and months in the field, the Battery's first deployment to Cultana (a great artillery range) and the Battery's trip to New Zealand on Exercise Tasman Exchange. A terrific trip filled with gunnery in mountainous terrain, adventure training, recreation and team building. This foundational posting exposed me to some amazing experiences, leaders and mentors that were pivotal in my development as an officer and Gunner, and laid the foundation for my Army and Gunner journey, and was the birth of many enduring friendships. For all of this I am eternally grateful.

Subsequent postings as Battery Commander and Commanding Officer of the then 8/12 Medium Regiment kept me connected to my roots. I was privileged to lead the Battery in East Timor and as the Commanding Officer to select members of 103 Battery to deploy to Helmand as part of the first gun line to deploy since Vietnam. As Commanding Officer, I was also proud to see females join the Regiment and Battery in non-RAA roles where they immediately made a great contribution. Since then, it has been wonderful to see females join the RAA and have an even bigger positive impact on the Battery's story and identity. In the years before the RAA transition to 155mm, the Battery was cursed and blessed by a shortage of 155mm ammunition. While frustrating and at times morale sapping, this austerity drove innovation and made us all understand the importance of making the most from scarce resources to deliver great training.

I am honored and grateful to Hemi for affording me the privilege of writing the foreword to his book and allowing me to connect again and pay tribute to 103 Battery.

The capturing of our history is critical. We draw lessons and inspiration from it. It is fundamental to what we do as Gunners and to our identity; it reminds us that we are part of something bigger than self and connects our past, present and future. As the RAA embarks on arguably the most significant period of change since World War 1, I encourage Hemi to update this book in the years to come and further encourage others throughout the RAA to consider similar projects to capture the history all Gunners serving in all batteries (including some on the verge of being raised) have made, are making and will make each and every day.

Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner.

Craig Furini
Major General (Retd)

Chapter 1: The Birth of the Sphinx

The 103rd Battery was raised in Tel El Kebir, Egypt on the 6th March 1916 after a trial of reorganisations. Originally, the 103rd Battery was raised on the 18th February 1916 as the 36th Battery, 12th Field Artillery Brigade and was made up of members who transferred from the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade. This new Brigade was intended for the 4th Australian Divisional Artillery and was inspected at 1st Australian Divisional Artillery HQ that same evening.

On the 4th March 1916 another reorganisation occurred and the 12th Field Artillery Brigade was taken back to the 1st Australian Division before being converted to a Howitzer Brigade: specifically the 21st Howitzer Brigade. Then, finally, the battery was renamed on the 6th March to the 103rd Howitzer Battery.

It must be stated for posterity that this battery and the 103rd Battery of today are two completely separate units. The 103rd Battery of today was raised in 1960 and perpetuates the memory of the battery that served in the First World War. This is a mistake that has almost been cemented into the history of the Royal Australian Artillery, but we as gunners of the 103rd Battery simply acknowledge the previous iterations of our battery because if we did not then their names, service and triumphs would fade into ambiguity.

Following their success in the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, Serbia felt their fierce reputation had been enhanced and as such felt ten feet tall and bullet-proof. After the Balkan Wars, the nationalists returned their attention to liberating Slavs in Austria-Hungary. Colonel Dimitrijevic (alias Apis), head of the ominously named *Union or Death* secret service organisation begun planning the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand – heir presumptive to the throne of Austria-Hungary - who was due to visit Bosnia for military inspections.

Colonel Dimitrijevic ordered the assassination. The Serbian Prime Minister, Nikola Pasic, aware but unsupportive of the plan, gave instructions to arrest the would-be-assassins as they tried to cross the border. But his orders were not followed. In Sarajevo at 11.30 am 28 June 1914 Gavrilo Princip, operating as one of six assassins, mortally shot Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for the assassination and having gained German support sent an unacceptable ultimatum to Serbia and giving only 48 hours to comply. Russia advised Serbia not to accept the ultimatum and on 28 July Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. There then followed a slew of European countries declaring war against one another. 29 July Russia mobilised against Austria-Hungary and Germany; 31 July Austria-Hungary mobilises; 1 August Germany declares war on Russia, France mobilises; 3 August Germany declares war on France; 4 August Britain declares war on Germany. The Ottoman Empire entered the war on 29 October 1914.

Surprisingly enough, the war was welcomed by the citizens of Europe. Intense nationalism and blind patriotism lead the way in the attitudes of the people at the time. Its unlikely that any person could have imagined what the war would bring, thinking that it would be won in a matter of months. Some enlisted with national pride, patriotism, a fervour for getting even against the violation of treaties and intense emotions of national necessity. The call for help would eventually reach Australia, where volunteers would enlist from all over the country.

With the declaration of war by Britain her empire was also at war although not duty bound to supply troops. But as the events in Europe were escalating the Australian Government had already advised the British Government they would 'defend her to our last man and our last shilling'. Warships and a force of 20,000 were promised. Because the Australian Defence Act 1903 only allowed for home defence a volunteer force had to be raised. The Australian Imperial Force, or as we know them: the AIF.

The Australian and New Zealand Forces moved to Egypt for training prior to deployment to Europe but the Ottoman Empire entry into the war saw them committed to a campaign in Gallipoli. With the withdrawal from Gallipoli the Australia troops congregated in Egypt. At this time the existing infantry comprised two Divisions (1st and 2nd) and two Brigades (4th and 8th) and some 40,000 reinforcements. It was decided to raise two new Australian Divisions (4th and 5th) and a New Zealand Division. To achieve this it was agreed to share the experienced troops of the 1st Division and 4th Brigade with the 4th and 5th Divisions.

This worked well with the Infantry where 16 existing battalions were split to form 32 battalions but it proved a problem with the artillery, a service requiring numerous specialists and longer and more careful training. In addition the artillery establishment for the Division was to be raised to the higher scale which would require a quadrupling of the artillery. This was considered an impossible task in the time available and it was agreed the lower scale would remain. Thus it was necessary to expand the artillery from six Brigades (18 four gun 18 pounder batteries) to twelve Brigades.

Although the reorganisation had only begun a fortnight previously on 29 February 1916 I Anzac Corps (1st and 2nd Australian Divisions and the New Zealand Division) was warned it would be required to move to Europe within two weeks. At the same time it was decided, in accordance with the desire of the War Office, the artillery must

be brought up to the scale adopted for all 'New Army' divisions. That is three Field Artillery Brigades of four batteries each equipped with four 18 pounders and a Howitzer Brigade of three batteries equipped with 4.5 inch howitzers.

This meant the artillery which had increased from 18 to 36 batteries in the fortnight were now required to expand to 60. There was only one way this could be done. According to the Official History;

'The 1st and 2nd Divisions absorbed the two artillery brigades which they were forming for the 4th and 5th Divisions, and also took back the two brigades which they had lent them. This gave the 1st and 2nd each their full quota of field-gun batteries. For their howitzer batteries men had to be obtained from the ammunition columns and elsewhere, and taken to France untrained.'

But this is not entirely accurate. In the 1st Division, on 18 February 1916, troops from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Brigades had been taken to form the 34th, 35th and 36th Batteries, 12 Field Artillery Brigade, 4th Division. With the urgent need for 'trained' personnel the troops were brought back to 1st Division and redesignated 101st, 102nd and 103rd Howitzer batteries 21st Howitzer Brigade.

"6 March 1916. The officers and other ranks of the 12th FA Brigade, 4 Aust Div, less 4 officers and 27 other ranks, are transferred to the 1st Aust Div to form 21st Howitzer Brigade allotted to that Division. The Brigade will consist of 3 Batteries numbered 101st, 102nd and 103rd Batteries and the 21st Brigade Ammunition Column. They will be composed of men transferred from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Field Artillery Brigades respectively. Officers appointed to 103 Bty:

Capt A H K Jopp commanding

Lt A A Evans

Lt A R Leschen"

-21st Howitzer Brigade War Diary Entry 6 March 1916, Australian War Memorial

Training in Egypt, 1916

“A SPECIAL TYPE OF RECRUIT – and a very excellent type is always attracted to that arm of service.”

–General Sir Ian Hamilton,

Speaking of artillery on an inspection tour of the Australian Military Forces in 1914.

Organised into their new Artillery Brigade, the 103rd Battery would conduct training in order to prepare their gunners for the times to come. A myriad of mundane tasks and training would occur, including foot drill, lectures, siting and constructing latrines, and according to war diaries they would even attend a marching exercise on the 18th of March.

Following the marching exercise the Battery began to prepare to move away from Egypt. The training in Gun Drill was a heavy focus during the next week or so, but as were lectures on topics such as the customs of war. The comforts of camp life were about to be stripped away as the battery prepared to deploy and the constant reminders of discipline on board ships was met with mixed emotions

HMT Manitou

The Brigade, including 103 Howitzer Battery, moved from Tel El Kebir on the night of 24 March 1916 entraining from No 2 Camp siding at 2230. It arrived at Alexandria at 0445 and embarked from Quay 75 on Board HMT MANITOU which sailed at 0600 26 March 1916. Strength 18 Officers, 469 Other Ranks, 13 horses, 5 absentees and 6 stowaways.

The travel was extensively long and with nothing to listen to but lecture after lecture – mind numbingly boring. 3 NCO's and 47 Men would be told off during the trip for “firing at submarines”. What's a digger to do?

The troops ‘enjoyed’ numerous lectures on the voyage, which included Battery tactics, lectures on billets and bivouacs and everything to do with France explained in precise detail. They would cover everything from the geography, government, and customs of the people.

Travelling Through France

The Battery finally arrived at Marseilles on the morning of the 1st of April 1916. Later on that afternoon they would march 13 kilometres to La Valentine Rest Camp, arriving at 1830. On the 2nd April Lt AA Evans arrived with 60 other ranks and 149 horses on board HMT Maryland. The Battery then marched back to Marseilles in order to embark on a train journey to Havre on the 5th April. The train journey was another long stint, going 3 days through the French countryside.

The Battery's route would take them through many popular towns in France such as Valence, Lyons, Chalon, Dijon, Versailles and Rouen. It would have been a beautiful journey had it not been so packed inside the cars. For instance, Valence is known for its St Apollinaire Cathedral, which dates back to the 11th Century and Dijon is one of France's principal wine-making areas (traditional mustard aside), the picturesque scenery would have been a welcome sight compared to the dry and arid conditions of Egypt. The Battery would travel from the South East to the Northern end of France near the English Channel.

The Battery would eventually arrive in Havre at 0230hrs on the 8th April where they would yet again march by foot to Sanvic Rest Camp from 0430hrs to 0600hrs. Sanvic is a suburb of Le Havre, which had several rest camps within it, meaning there were multiple camps by the same name and its difficult to determine which one exactly the battery would have attended. In any case, four days would be spent here stretching legs and recuperating from the train journey.

On the 10th April, Guns and Vehicles would be drawn out and oddly enough, bicycles would also be given to orderlies as there simply weren't enough horses. First, not enough batteries to a division and now bicycles instead of horses. Everything would be loaded onto yet another train which would then depart on the 12th and headed straight for Borre, further along the English Channel,

taking another two days of travel. The Battery arrived in the dead of the night at approximately 0030hrs to be met with wet weather with slight snow, a cold and miserable night.

The Battery would move from Borre on the 12th April and head to Trou Bayard before they then finally moved onto their position near Fleurbaix. After weeks of travelling, the Battery had finally deployed to their gun position.

Fleurbaix, France, 1916

Initially, the gunners found a pleasant land in France, a welcome sight from constant sea voyages or arid landscapes like Egypt, but now for the first time the AIF was in the main theatre of war. Four divisions of around 20,000 men arrived in France and this Battery was amongst them. This area had been fought over by the British in 1915, but Australian Divisions were called in to help ease the pressure the Germans had on the region.

The brand new Howitzer Brigades would have a short existence, because when the A.I.F. arrived in France they were disbanded once more. The newly organised brigades would be absorbed into the pre-existing Field Brigades during the Battery's time in France for "tactical purposes". The 103rd Battery would join the 3rd Field Brigade on the 15th May 1916, replacing 24 Battery (who moved to 21 Field Brigade) and they would then become a part of the line at Fleurbaix, a quaint village 4 miles from the Belgian Border.

Within its first week the 103rd battery would engage targets with mixed results, totalling 833 rounds being fired, however the fuzes were reportedly erratic and non-effective at times. One mission conducted on the 9th of May was a total of 57 rounds on a group of houses where they had done considerable damage and this was following a report of engine noises being heard in the area. The following day, however, only one in every eight rounds would detonate.

The tempo at Fleurbaix would put any modern gunner to the test. The battery had fired countless missions day in and out- as well as moving constantly through awful conditions. All missions were tests of endurance, firing as many as 60 rounds in one mission before moving again and firing another 22. According to the battery's war diaries, however, they had a reputation for a spirit that could not be killed, despite all the horrid conditions and the demanding tempo the battery continued to display high morale in all facets of their deployment.

The ammo states throughout the period the battery were present in Fleurbaix are a stark confirmation of the intense effort and tempo of the missions fired. Within the first week the battery had fired 89 rounds of shrapnel as well as 350 rounds of HE and that number was set to rise as they outperformed themselves again and again. The following week they'd fired 120 Shrapnel and 758 HE. Throughout the entire time the battery's total would be 164 Shrapnel and 20,342 HE. This puts an average of 124 rounds fired per day, 31 rounds per gun between April and August.

The Battery's invincible spirit would be put to the test on the 11th June, as they faced their first deaths. No.1 Gun received incoming counter battery fire, killing four members of the detachment instantly with a 4.2in Shell. GNR J.F. Berry, BDR H. Mille, CPL A.D. Fletcher and DVR H.S. Arthur would all perish. The Battery would then move to a new gun position between Fleurbaix and Laventie. Another death would follow later that month on the 28th June, where Sergeant D. Fraser would be killed by rifle fire.

In the beginning weeks of July, the Battery would move on to a new area of operations to the south. They marched by foot on the 11th July to Balleul, a 48km journey which would put them just 3km from the Belgian border. On the 19th of July, after a gruelling march they would finally arrive at a place called Becourt.

Within this same day they engaged what they suspected to be enemy trenches near Pozieres. The tempo was only rising, after spending a week marching they immediately picked up again and began firing missions. According to their ammo state from the 20th – 31st July they'd fire 4093 rounds of HE, in support of the British and Australian Infantry for the Battle of Pozieres. The operations conducted around the Somme and Pozieres lasted until September. It was once said by historian Charles Bean that there was no other place on earth that is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice.

The Battery would continue to support the various elements amongst the area of operations, firing a further 2213 HE into the muddy, dreadful terrain. From the 19th of July to August the 12th

they would remain in position to support the operations in which the British were conducting in the area.

Reserve Area

The 103rd Battery, for all its incredible efforts, would eventually gain some respite on the 12th August. The 3rd Field Artillery Brigade would be pulled back into the reserve area at St Leger where they would take the opportunity to rest for a few brief days. During their time in the reserve area, however, the members of the battery would be subjected to an intense course of training. This included Gun Drill, Manoeuvres, Battery Drill and finally cleaning saddlery and equipment.

On the 15th, however, a mere three days later the Brigade would move out once again. Departing St. Leger by foot they would march onwards to Vandencourt – a 68km journey. Vandencourt was reportedly good for the night as they established a bivouac in the vicinity of the town. Yet, they still hadn't reached their destination. The Brigade were headed straight for the front line at La Boisselle, another 72km away, which they would complete the next day



La Boisselle, France

The 3rd Field Artillery Brigade would arrive to relieve the 4th Field Artillery Brigade – a brigade from the 2nd Australian Division. The 103rd Battery replaced the 104th Battery in their slow barrage operations in the front line. After the insane workload the gunners of 103rd Battery had already put in so far, a slow barrage must have been a welcome sight. 12 Rounds would be fired per Battery, per hour during the day and the pace would double to 24 rounds per Battery during the night time. These kinds of missions are for harassment and disruption, as well as maintaining a dominating presence on the sometimes stale battlefields of the Great War.

The 4th Field Artillery Brigade would return to the area one week later, relieving the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade – 104 Battery replacing 103. Every battery of the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade were clear of the area by 1430. Under their own steam, the batteries of the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade would move to the Brickfields to stay for the night.

The following day the Brigade would then move once again by foot to Orville, spending yet another hard day marching. They would not gain any respite until catching a train into Auteuil. The Brigade did not make this move so that they could rest, however, they were preparing to reinforce the front line in Ypres. Upon arriving in Auteuil, the Brigade would conduct routine stable duties and cleaning equipment. The BC, a few FO officers and linesmen would leave on the 29th August to make preparations to relieving the 4th Imperial Division.

Ypres

On the first day of September 1916 the recon party would move forward to select Battery positions for the preparations of moving further into the front line. They selected a spot in the vicinity of Ouderdom, Belgium. All Batteries of the Brigade would do this independently and make their own preparations to ready themselves to move into the frontline. Once the batteries were firm it was time to register.

Registration firing began on the 3rd September, continuing through until the 8th. The details were then passed onto the wider brigade, but there was the constant threat of counter battery fire. The 103rd Battery fired back at an enemy gun position on the 11th of September, silencing them in the process. With small victories littered throughout, the battery would be relieved by the 105th Battery before falling back to Ouderdom on the 14th of September. During their short stay on the front lines they would end up firing 446 HE rounds.

The arrival of October saw the Germans step up their retaliations. The war so far had been brutal and unforgiving, constant shelling happening on both sides as well as the constant charges made by the British and Australians. It was a war of attrition littered with barrages and often pyrrhic victories, which had little to show in terms of ground gained.

On the 8th of October the Germans fired a heavy mission consisting of 36 4.2" shells and the 103rd Battery retaliated with 21 rounds. There was a constant back and forth like this as the once beautiful greenery of France turned to fields of mud and debris. The following day the Brigade itself would retaliate with several missions.

This was to suppress the intermittent and erratic firing coming from the German lines. The German's didn't seem to target any one area in particular as their missions fell onto scattered areas of the Brigade's lines. On each and every occasion the Brigade

retaliated it suppressed the firing, almost as if it were a reminder of who was in charge. The Germans were clearly feeling out the area, but every mission they fired seemed to be received with quick and effective reactions from the Brigade.

Once satisfied that the German's were suppressed, the Brigade ordered all Batteries to fire at pre-determined locations so they could stir the Germans into life. They attempted to create movement in the enemy lines so that they could be more easily observed, opening the way to more effective fire. Once the ground work was laid, the 103rd Battery would once again rotate with the 105th Battery back into the wagon lines at Ouderdom on the 16th October. This constant shift was required to keep the Batteries effective and fresh, so to speak.

They would return to the frontline in a new position in Eles, the Somme, on the 26th where they'd fire 151 HE rounds as a part of a normal barrage, if you could even consider it normal. This was a Brigade wide effort as they continued to sap the German line, but they would face heavy counter-battery fire late that afternoon. The constant shelling continuously shifted the landscape around the soldiers of the 103rd Battery. Throughout the remainder of the month they'd continue firing registration of barrage lines, now only receiving light intermittent fire in return.

One has to consider what this war diary now considers as light. The absolute barrages the Brigade had seen over the course of their stay in the area must make one desensitised to the sights and sounds of counter battery fire. Had these men not shown such grit and determination during each of their rotations to the front line, then perhaps one may have considered any kind of counter battery fire to be rather disastrous. And, of course, the question answers itself: If this is what the writer considered light, then what on earth did they consider to be heavy?

During November the Battery would remain at Eles, firing registration at pre-determined targets, only deviating from this plan if operational orders were given. On the 14th Brigade would

order all Batteries to fire in support of an attack lead by the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade. It is written that the left objective was achieved whilst the right only celebrated small successes. Following this, the Brigade decided that whilst the German lines were recovering from the attack they would take the opportunity to improve their own.

Re-registration was in order, so the 103rd Battery would fire to confirm zones and ranges. They would also utilise this lapse in battle to improve gun emplacements, bolster the ammunition dumps and construct new gun platforms.

At the conclusion of the Battle of the Somme in November, everyone prepared to dig in for winter. According to *Voices of The First World War*, the winter was unbelievably cold. The absolute depths of misery were felt by all who were caught in the snow, wind and frost. The cold made the days long and the temperature drop at night was unbearable. It wasn't just the cold that the gunners had to endure, however, it was the flooded trenches and the miles of destruction all around them.

The soil, stirred up by continuous gunfire, became waterlogged and extremely muddy. Its reported that for weeks the conditions on the Somme meant its inhabitants were often up to the waist in mud and shell holes filled with the soft mud meant anyone stepping into them would drown – and there was nothing you could do about it. There would be some reprieve in the later months of the winter, however, as the ground would eventually freeze solid. At last the prayers of solid ground to walk on would be answered, but at the cost of progressively colder and colder days.

December saw the firing of zoning and sweeping missions, as well as normal barrage fire. Verifying corrections made was essential as it ensured the accuracy of the guns. This would continue throughout the whole month of December, firing a high number of rounds and not receiving anything in return. For the most part it was quiet on the German lines. The Battery would fire between 151 to as much as 253 rounds in the space of one day and only on the

15th they would receive light fire in return – a good indicator of low morale on the German side.

All members of the Brigade suffered during this winter however, despite the high tempo they maintained. Australians, far from home, living in hell on earth as well as experiencing the full might of a European winter. Once the ground had frozen solid the shells became less accurate, as they would skirt or bounce off the rock hard soil. This also meant they couldn't dig further during this time, everything was hard as bedrock.

On the 29th and 30th of December, however, the Germans surprisingly stepped up their responses to the barrages – firing several 8" rounds this time. 8" shells were the epitome of destruction. One such shell landed near the 103rd Battery's position, striking with a very bad detonation that resulted in craters 15 feet wide and 11 feet deep. This sort of pattern of constant barraging would continue throughout January, with the 103rd Battery firing around 100 to 200 rounds a day.

A year of blood, sweat and tears to be sure. From the raising of the battery in the searing heat of Egypt, training and gallivanting – to the restless travel on ships, trains and gruelling marches, those who made it to the end of the year had experienced a myriad of emotions, tribulations and triumphs. Moving to the other side of the world from their various homes in search of adventure and glory, it's no small secret the Anzacs as a whole suffered horrible conditions and the harsh realities of war. In spite of all the terrifying trials the battery faced, they still held a reputation for an unbreakable spirit, one that was infectious enough to be written about in various war diaries.

1917

An eventual reprieve would arrive on the 11th of January, the 24th Field Artillery Brigade relieving the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade, allowing them to push back into the reserve. 112 Battery would replace the 103rd on the front lines. Upon returning to the wagon lines in the reserve, the 103rd would march out on the 12th January, headed to Buire to camp for the night. They would move on to Naours via villes Bocage and Flesselles. Here at Naours, they would begin their routine maintenance on their equipment beginning from the 14th January.

The Battery would continue to rest and recuperate in the Naours until the 19th where another reorganisation of the 1st Divisional Artillery. 103 Battery was not required to reorganise as the arrival of equipment ensured their security in remaining together, as opposed to being absorbed into other batteries. The reorganisation precluded the grim arrival of another move to the front lines again, once more into the fray.

On the 26th Battery were back in business as they marched back to Buire on the same route they took earlier that month before resting in the reserve wagon lines. The BC would move out with telephonists and Brigade commanders into the line so they could become ready to relieve the 14th Field Artillery Brigade.

The day after on 27 January the 18 pounder batteries belonging to the 3rd Field Brigade were increased to six guns per battery. The 3rd Field Brigade would now be redesignated as the 3rd (Army) Brigade.

On the 30th of January the 14th and 3rd Brigades would rotate, however the 103rd Battery would remain in reserve this time. Unfortunately for 115 Battery, they would not be relieved by the 103rd. Instead, the 103rd Battery was then attached to the 2nd Field Artillery Brigade, where they would remain until March.

Unfortunately there are little writings available to determine why exactly the 103rd was detached from the 3rd Brigade or what tasks they performed during February. The next closest entry in war diaries picks up again in March, which saw the withdrawal of the German forces, however the entry is actually after the date the 103rd returned to the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade's position.

On the 16th March the AIF had occupied Bapaume and, of course, the guns had to move up in order to cover the advance. It wouldn't be until the 23rd where the Germans would attempt a counterattack in order to regain lost ground, but this move was too little too late.

On the 2 April, 103 battery absorbed a section of 15 howitzer battery, meaning they now possessed six 4.5 inch guns. Mid-April saw the destruction of the Regiment's kite balloon – a kind of aerodynamic hot air balloon – taken out by German planes, setting it ablaze and destroying it. Kite balloons were designed to be able to fly in higher winds than ordinary round balloons and they were used primarily for observation. The loss of such an important piece of equipment – especially one so advanced for the era, was a hard hit to handle.

Despite this, the infantry used the momentum created by thwarting the German counter attacks to advance through Doignes and Louveral. Amazingly enough, the snow was still heavy – even in April. The momentum generated by the German withdrawal, meant the Battery would also move once more to Halpincourt, with the BC moving ahead to recon the battery position. The Infantry continuously attacked, moving through Hemies and the battery consistently supporting through registration missions before establishing supreme firepower in the area.

Finally, after such a large push, the 103rd would eventually be relieved on the 12th May, moving to Velu Wood where they could enjoy some brief respite from the tempo. Its from here in Velu Wood where they would eventually embark on a train journey at Albert, arriving at Bailleul on the 19th. Its from this position that they would then continue to fight around Messines. It would be a

gruelling month of fighting until they would be withdrawn from action on the 26th of June. They would move to Wulverghem to take a well-earned rest.

The 3rd of July saw the Battery come under heavy shell-fire from the German lines. The intense fire had caused an ammunition dump nearby to be set ablaze, threatening the lives of every man present. LT. Gordon Murray Wallace of the 103rd would leave the safety of the lines in order to ensure that no harm would come to his men.

“Awarded for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in leaving cover with a sergeant under very heavy shell fire and extinguishing two large ammunition dumps which were burning and exploding close to his battery. This gallant and timely action furnished a most inspiring example to the men of the battery.” – Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, 20th December 1917, Page 3374, Position 12

The constant shifting of the battlespace meant that moving was a priority as well. The battery would continue to change positions throughout the year, either pulling into reserve or relieving the line. The 3rd Artillery Field Brigade eventually became a part of the XV Corps and were attached to the 32nd Divisional Artillery from the 14th July. Their movements included Dunkerque, Nieuport and Dickebusch areas, not seeing relief until the 23rd of August.

Pulled back into reserve, the Brigade marched from the line to Amplier to rest for a period of 2 days. They would then entrain to Godewaersvelde to conduct their routine maintenance and rest. This of course included stable duties and the cleaning of saddlery and equipment. They wouldn't face the call to the frontline again until the 2nd of September, a cruisey one and a half weeks.

Marching back into Ypres line on the 2nd of September, the Battery's rest proved to have been beneficial. Hitting the ground running,, the 103rd would fire 446 rounds of HE right off the bat in barrage-styled missions. Despite this incredible level of tempo, the

Battery would lose two more members, BDR Seeley and GNR Giddings. The threat they faced on the line never diminished, despite having suppressed counter battery fire before in the past.

Heavy fighting would ensue in the closing months of 1917, constant shelling that was desperate to withdraw or destroy the enemy, brutal rifle fire and the constant threat of gas incoming from enemy lines. The gas is notorious even today as it blinds and chokes its victims. Forcing your enemy to don gas masks is an advantage unto itself, those who are not already blinded by the gas have now just impaired their vision with poorly made, restrictive masks.

1918

Once again, the troops prepared for another harsh winter. In the opening months of 1918 all was quiet. There was little to no fighting between both sides to be seen, all felt the depths of yet another winter. For this period, everyone just tried to survive.

The relative silence on both sides, however, would eventually be broken in February, just when all on the line could look forward to Mother Nature easing her icy grip on the battlefield. The enemy opened up with constant shelling and non-stop gassing. Phosgene, Mustard Oil and Sneezing Stuff. Both sides hadn't made much progress for a few months and the opening move for the Germans was to snuff the Brigade with gasses. On one occasion they even used cyanide gas.

The Allies as a whole, Britain, France, America and Australia, would begin the 100 days offensive on the Hindenburg Line on the 8th August 1918. A 56 hour bombardment involving 1,637 guns preluded the attack and the Allies would breach the Hindenburg Line on the 29th September. Led by Australian troops, the Allies would push through to Bellicourt, supported by Artillery, tanks and aircraft. Due to the scale of the battle, the infantry didn't require a lot of artillery and as such the 103rd Battery wouldn't play a very big part in the battle.

The war ended the following month, just a few weeks after the victory of breaching the Hindenburg line. After the armistice was signed the 103rd Battery would move to Dinant, Belgium, where they would prepare for all their guns and equipment to be handed back over to the Army Ordnance Department of the British Army.

They wouldn't leave until the 24th February 1919 and by this stage there were so few of them left they would be attached to the 101st Battery for the journey home. They would soon face the process of demobilisation. Whilst the honour roll may not reflect a number of deaths large enough to constitute a Battery being demobilised, one must appreciate the horrid conditions experienced throughout the

war in its entirety. Freezing cold winter months, disease, the threat of injury. The Battery lost most members through constant repatriation and although the war in Europe was over, there was one more battle to face for those who had been repatriated. Dealing with the Repatriation Department.

J.J.H. Goodwin

According to the *Westralian Worker* - a Western Australian newspaper operating out of Perth from 1900-1951 - an ex-Driver of the 103rd Howtizer Battery J.J.H. Goodwin gained a brief moment in the spotlight for fighting against the Repatriation Department's decision to refuse his application for benefits. Driver Goodwin was invalidated to Australia in December of 1917 following horrific injuries that sent his medical class to C3 – totally disabled. He received his discharge and was promised a full pension in February the following year.

The Repatriation Act no 6. Stated that he would be entitled to a special pension of £4 per week and he of course had made a formal application to begin receiving these benefits. Four months after his application, however the Department had still been suspiciously absent in adhering to their promises. Goodwin would then write to the Federal Labor Member, Mr. McGrath, to push the Department into action. Shortly after, however, he would be told that his application was denied.

Mr. Goodwin immediately appealed the decision after seeing a medical board on October 18th 1921. The board told him that he would be receiving the correct amount as soon as October the 20th – which is now 16 months after the date he should have received it. Goodwin argued that, because of his C3, he should be entitled to the pension over the entire period in which the Act covered it – and claimed for arrears of payment which totalled £129.

Once again, the Repatriation Department turned him down, despite the fact they were clearly in the wrong with their lack of action and commitment. He sought the aid of the RSSILA in order to bring his claim before the Minister, where it would be refused – but this time by the political head.

His next step would be to invoke the powers and help of the law and he would appear as a man demanding his full rights – instead of a soldier begging for a favour. Inside a week after appearing

before the courts the Department wrote a cheque for the full amount of arrears and handed it off to Goodwin's solicitor and this would be the only prompt act by the Department in the whole duration of this year and a half long campaign.

The article finishes with the writer expressing their disbelief that someone like Goodwin, a man completely disabled by his service in the Great War, with a case that was so obviously just, was stopped at every step of the way and only received his benefits after fighting for it. The writer also expresses their concern for the rest of the Australian Men who have been robbed or defrauded by the "Torry-run and Tory-ridden" Repatriation Department because they didn't show the same level of commitment as Goodwin. They then conclude the article urging for action against the Department and that Goodwin's case is all the evidence the public needed to demand a complete overhaul of the department.

Chapter 2: The Inter War Years

After the Great War, the battery had disbanded but the 103rd Battery would make a comeback throughout the interwar years. It would be re-raised on the 31st March 1921 in Western Australia as a Citizen Militia Force unit. To make up the numbers for a new battery the Militia would post members from the 8th, 38th and 39th Batteries. Despite popular belief, the Battery was not raised in Sydney, NSW in 1919.

The Army as a whole during this time called for a reorganisation. The new system would adopt a divisional structure, where individual units would be re-designated and segregated into new areas in 1921. Military Order 95, adopted in 1921, saw that the 103rd would be raised with the 3rd Field Brigade. To assist with the raising of the battery in terms of manpower, members from the 8th, 38th and 39th batteries would be drawn in to make up the numbers. Finding a new home in Guildford, Western Australia the Battery was back in full swing.

For clarification, this Battery was not resurrected. This chapter explains the exploits of the entirely new CMF sub unit that bore the name 103 Howitzer Battery. Similarly, the post war 3rd Field Brigade was not the same Brigade that fought in the war. These were CMF units and sub units. This is about those who shared our name.

Following the war, many members of the public still felt the swelling prides of nationalism and patriotism. As such, support for the Army was still very strong – despite the horrible “shell shock” most returned members experienced. The duty Australia performed in the Great War was seen as remarkable and for the most part many members of the public took pride in knowing that the Anzacs sacrificed so much for the young country Australia was. In light of the public attitudes towards the military, it made for a very welcoming community that made their towns open and

hospitable to the soldiers – and by extension the gunners of the
103rd Battery

The Battery's New Home

The 103rd Battery quickly made strong local-ties with the community and was often reported about in newspapers such as *The West Australian*, *The Westralian Worker* and *Western Mail*. Onlookers would often gather to witness various training exercises with the 18 Pounder Howitzers, which would be received with enthusiasm and genuine interest. Full details of the tactics in practice, types of ammunition used and even the identities of visiting dignitaries would be reported about in excruciating detail – something you would only find in official Army newspapers today. It seems that local readers were not only interested in that kind of material but so much so that they would explore the absolute minutia of details as to paint a picture – in issue after issue.

ARTILLERY TRAINEES FOR NORTHAM



TROOPS OF THE 3rd FIELD BRIGADE, A.F.A. photographed today on the railway station before leaving for the camp of continuous training at Northam. These men belong to the 103rd (Howitzer) Battery and the 8th Battery. A mock battle, extending over three days and two nights, under service conditions, will be included in the training.

The training the 103rd Battery received during this time was varied and innovative. Standard gun drill practice was a staple, however learning to ride horses and the organisation of coastal defence made their way into the training programs. According to the *West Australian* on the 28th Oct 1937, the Battery experimented with various methods of communication – both radio telephone and field telephone to ensure uninterrupted flow of adjustments sent from the OP. Two members of the weather bureau also provided accurate information on occasions as well, reporting on wind speed and direction to increase the effectiveness of fire. The Battery also experimented with link firing – a method where one gun is used to range find, and once the range is established, would then extend the mission to the rest of the battery for the fire for effect. This method is still used today.



ARTILLERYMEN IN TRAINING

On Friday afternoon the 103 Howitzer Battery of the 3rd Australian Field Artillery fired 40 rounds of ammunition at distant targets in practice along the coast near Rockingham. Major A. Watts was in charge of the action, which was part of the routine of the eight-day training camp which ends to-day.

In light of the popularity of the Battery, their social lives were often written about. Members had been reported winning multiple trophies on every sports field imaginable, organising community events such as debutante balls and having the unique opportunity of attending quarterly reunions. The reunions themselves were for ex-103rd Battery members who fought in the Great War, to give them acknowledgement and a place to be amongst friends. The invitations for the quarterly reunions in the town hall however were extended to any ex serving personnel and the like. The events would attract visits from veterans and dignitaries – including Sir Joseph Hobbs, the leader of the 1st Divisional Artillery during the Great War. The Battery were reputed to draw large crowds to these events.

Similarly, one article from *The West Australian* 22nd May 1934, describes the organisation of a debutante ball. Members of the 103rd Battery's Sergeants Mess assisted the committee in the process of making preparations of the ball without charge. The article goes on to say that over 60 debutantes – a record for the state – wished to be a part of this specific ball and all of their partners were to be military men. Of the 60 girls, 8 would be nominated by the Lady Mayoress of Perth, a clear display of her interest in the community, the military and by extension the Battery. The committee, of which the 103rd Battery were invested in, organised an honour guard for the girl's arrivals – complete with a bugle call as they walk a literal red carpet. It was this kind of engagement that made the Battery very well liked within the community.

Across the seas in Europe, however, whilst the celebrations and enjoyments of this beautifully organised debutante ball went on in Australia, Nazi Germany would be in full swing. Founded on the 30th January 1933, Germany would be clawing its way out of The Great Depression on the foundations of the Nazi Party. The hatreds sown in the hearts of many during the Great War would come to a head and in September of 1939 the Germans would invade Poland, starting World War II.

“In consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result, Australia is also at war” – Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies.

The Battery's good life in the CMF would draw to a close in early 1941 as the 3rd Field Brigade would yet again be reorganised, this time into a Regimental structure. The new structure, adopted in late 1940, would cut down to Regiments consisting of 2 batteries of 4.5-Inch guns and the now disbanded 103rd Battery would make up 'D' Troop in the 7th and 8th Field Batteries. They retained their Howitzers until 1942 until a newly raised 9th Field Battery needed the equipment. Australia entered the war on the 3rd September 1939 and it can be reasonably assumed that as a CMF unit, the 103rd Battery's participation consisted of home defence between 1939 and 1940. Upon its disbandment in 1941, however, the now ex-members of the 103rd Battery would see out their service with the 3rd Field Regiment. Once more, unto the breach.

Chapter 3: Cloud Killers

The 103rd Battery faded out of existence in a post-war world. It continued to be a memory, until the Royal Australian Artillery would decide in 1954 that the Regular Batteries needed to be numbered using a more standardised system for ease of understanding. A DRA minute written in August of 1954 stated that batteries needed to bear this number despite their roles. As a result of this decision, the 103rd Battery would rise again, this time far from the welcoming community of Guildford WA and during this rebirth they would not be behind the sights of a Howitzer. This was a new chapter for the Battery as they re-raised as the 103rd Anti-Aircraft Battery. Once again, this battery has no relation to the Great War unit.

According to Warrant Officer 2 L Johnston's *History of A Field Battery* The 1st Field Regiment in Middle Head, Sydney, had already raised B Anti-Aircraft Battery on the 16th July 1949. B Anti-Aircraft Battery was originally a Light Anti-Air Battery, but in early 1950 made the transition to Heavy Anti-Air. They would reorganise into two troops, bearing three QF 3.7-Inch mobile Heavy Anti-Air Guns. This was done for ease of training and it wasn't necessary at the time to have Light Anti-Air Gunners, so they deemed it easier to train them if the need arose.



Figure 1figure 7. Bill Taylor and CAPT Reg Gardener. 1956



The 103rd Anti Air Battery is Born

By March 1952 the B Anti-Aircraft Battery would be redesignated as 3 Anti-Aircraft Battery and subsequently, following the command of the DRA Minute of 1954, would be renamed 103 Anti Air Battery as a part of the 1st Field Regiment. Within its structure A Battery, the 101st and the 102nd Battery already existed and adhering to the new standardised system the 103rd Battery was reborn. The minute stated the role the new batteries played was irrelevant and it was hence named the 103rd.

This was done without the intention of perpetuating the Great War unit, but it doesn't make this Battery any less a part of the history. The 103rd Battery of today does not have a direct lineage to the Great War Battery or the CMF Battery, but we perpetuate their title in remembrance of them. The Australian Army seems to struggle with the differences between perpetuation and lineage – and this mistake, once again, was almost cemented into the history of the RAA. Its similar to the differences of a predecessor and an ancestor. An ancestor is somebody who you are directly related to, whereas a predecessor is anyone who came before you – in this case the 103rd AA is a predecessor.

There is very little to speak of in terms of the Anti-Aircraft Battery, as very little was written about their activities during their brief existence. When it was disbanded in May of 1957 some of its personnel moved on to the Heavy Anti-Aircraft Increment at the School of Artillery and formed a depot element. They would hence be involved in the training of Heavy Anti-Aircraft gunnery for the CMF. This would continue until 1960, where they would become the instrument operators for guided weapon systems (such as surface-to-air missiles) that the Army had expressed interest in purchasing. Its here that the ex-members of the 103rd would become a part of Radar Troop at the School.

The remainder of the members after the disbandment were posted to raise 111 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, which was already a part of

the Regimental structure but was until this point unmanned. Here they would continue their service and once again the 103rd Battery would fade out of existence.

As mentioned, this battery did not perpetuate the Great War unit, however it may be a direct relative of the battery today. The original agreements of December 1954 for renumbering batteries directed that the number was to be retained irrespective of the role – and *also* for the life of the battery. Years later, in 1963, the Colonels Commandant agreed that no changes should be made in the numbers already borne by batteries on the ORBAT. This was a recognition of the fine traditions made by the 103 Batteries of the past. Whilst it is not confirmed, this may be considered a relative.

Chapter 4: This Time for Good

Camp Terendak, Malaya

1960

An army wide reorganisation occurred in 1960, where it would become a pentropic divisional organisation. The new structure essentially necessitated the need for another Artillery Regiment, specifically 4 Regiment RAA, which would be located at Wacol, in Brisbane. After the raising of 4 Regiment the 103rd Battery would reappear in June 1960, becoming born again. This time it was to stick around for good.



Figure 1 GPO LT R Walker leading A Troop 103 Field Battery RAA at the Farewell Parade, Wacol, QLD, 1961. Right Guide of A Troop is TSM WO2 Nipper O'Brian. Far Left soldier is WO2 Lofty Williams, TSM B Troop.. Courtesy of the 103rd Battery private collection.

1961

In October 1961 the Battery deployed to Malaya in order to relieve the 101st Battery. They would join the Far Eastern Strategic Reserve, alongside the British 26th Field Regiment in Camp Terendak. The Battery were the artillery element of the 28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Group and within Terendak there would be British, Australian and New Zealander Troops.

Camp Terendak, located in Malacca, was no simple tent-city style base. The “camp” was a self-contained city in its own right. Member’s families could enjoy modern housing, a cinema and a school, and according to the *Canberra Times*, a £750,000 church was constructed. Before the appearance of the Church, most services were held in the open air and the school held many weddings and celebrations. Members could enjoy sporting events, social gatherings and of course, a hard-earned drink.

Camp Terendak covered 1500 acres and the training area stretching beyond it covered another 3500. It was constructed in the late 1950’s but developments would continue onwards during the 103rd Battery’s stay there. By the end of the 1960’s the Camp held a police detachment, an education centre, a hospital and four churches. The Terendak Garrison Cemetery hosts the graves of family members who passed during their stay, as well as soldiers involved in the conflicts of Indonesia at the time.

Soon after arrival, the Battery were issued with the new 105mm L5 Pack Howitzers. In January of 1962 they would be the first Commonwealth Army Unit in Malaya to fire the weapon – which required some adjustment in comparison to the 25 pounder guns that the battery were used to at this time. They would end up firing 360 rounds as a part of a one day exercise at the Asahan Artillery Range near Malacca. The Australian Army Force Commander for Singapore and Malaya, Brigadier B.J. Bleechmore visited the gun position to oversee the new weapon’s capabilities.

1963

When the Battery returned to Australia, they wouldn't be going back to Wacol, instead they would be moved to Kokoda Barracks in Holsworthy to join with the 1st Field Regiment. They would remain here until they received warning that they would be needed in South Vietnam in the closing months of 1965.



Figure 1 The 103rd Battery's farewell parade from Malacca, Malaya. Courtesy of the 103rd Battery private collection

Vietnam

1966

In preparation for deployment to South Vietnam the battery participated in Exercise Cesar Augustus and Exercise Iron Lady, both heavily intense in their own right.

In May 1966 the 103rd Battery would start their 12 month tour of Vietnam, arriving into Vung Tau to familiarise themselves with the area until the 6th of June. The battery would then be moved by air to Nui Dat, alongside the Australian 105th Battery and the New Zealander 161 Field Battery to take up positions in the regimental gun area.

On the 17th of August, the Nui Dat Task Force base came under mortar fire in an attack that lasted 15-20 minutes. A total of 30 rounds fell into the Regimental Area, wreaking havoc and destruction as the rounds detonated. 10 minutes into the attack, the battery received orders to conduct counter battery fire – a previously prepared task drawn from intelligence related to likely enemy approaches. Under mortar fire, the battery retaliated insanely quickly once the order was given, having 6 rounds in the air before anybody else had fired.

A number of casualties resulted from the attack. Previous write-ups, including those from the AWM have confirmed 2 casualties that came from the attack, however an inconsistency appears when these recounts are compared with the Royal Australian Artillery History Collection's records. Their records indicate that a total of 6 people were affected by the mortar attacks; Pvt K. Quinell, Gnr P. Norris, Gnr C. Chapman, Bdr Terence Hayes, K. Doehramm and D. Simmons. The RAAHC is comprised of previous serving members who were on the ground on the 17th of August, so its on good authority the number could actually be 6.

Of course, the highlight of the entire tour is the battery's participation in the Battle of Long Tan – the first major contact by Australian troops during the war. They would fire 1078 rounds over the course of the battle in arduous conditions of relentless rain, failing light and very poor visibility due to both. 103rd Battery were the General Duties Battery – meaning they'd fire any adjustments in the case of a regimental fire mission. Using 105mm Pack Howitzers, all 6 guns fired in support of 6RAR for Long Tan, as well as guns from the 105th and 161st – and at one point 155mm Guns from an American callsign.

Teams of people were labouring hard to supply the battery with ammunition, ferrying bombs for the constantly firing Pack Howitzers. According to the AWM, the Battery has been recorded as the only artillery unit to be supplied by air during the battle. A Chinook reportedly delivered ammunition directly to the gun position without stopping. It's reported that the Chinook hovered a few feet off the ground, nose up and skid dragging the tail end to deliver ammunition out the back. This was all done to avoid being an easy target in the case of counter battery fire.

Following Long Tan, the Battery would operate in support of 5RAR and as a result they would begin to spend more time away from the relative safety of Nui Dat. The AWM states that the battery supported 5 RAR during Operation Toldedo (AKA Darlinghurst). The 103rd Battery occupied a position in the vicinity of Binh Bah village and awaited the call for fire when 5 RAR inevitably sought out the enemy.



Figure 1 Delta Gun prepares to fire. Pictured are Allen Mackenzie, John McNally, Brian Ranson and Graeme Pratt. Courtesy of John Redman, 103fieldbatteryraa.net

The Operation required 5RAR to begin sweeping across parts of the Phuoc Tuy province, specifically where they could seek out and find any Viet Cong withdrawing from the Battle of Long Tan. This was to maintain momentum and to follow through on the successes won at Long Tan. The issue was that the Australian Task Force was too undermanned to effectively carry out this operation over a large area, so a combined operation with the Americans was soon organised.

Operation Toledo covered two weeks of little success. The propaganda generated by the Viet Cong claimed that they had won the Battle of Long Tan and claimed to have wiped out 6 RAR. Prisoners from Long Tan, however, confirmed the units in which they served were severely weakened and furthermore they eluded to another regiment preparing a counter attack on Binh Bah.

During the course of the Operation, the Marines and 5 RAR swept in a southerly direction in order to repel the enemy and push them

into pre-made blocking positions held by the Marines or the Task Force. The 103rd Battery took up positions in the Binh Bah village whilst 5RAR conducted their patrols, however the operation would prove completely fruitless – they would only take out a handful of enemy and according to the 5 RAR Association's website no calls for fire were needed.



Figure 12 Gunners preparing a gun pit. Pictured are Errol Phillips, Rod Simpson, Noel Howard and Neil King. Courtesy of John Redman, 103fieldbatteryraa.net

Operation Wollongong / Renmark 1967

The battery would continue to support 5 RAR to the west of Nui Dat, along Route 15 and in one instance on Long Son Island, however little is recorded before their participation in Operation Caloundra in January of 1967. Locals in Binh Bah had described Viet Cong moving into the area and another cordon and search was considered over the Christmas period, however the Viet Cong had illusively vanished – so the Task Force stayed their hand until a better opportunity of success presented itself having learnt from its mistakes in Operation Darlinghurst.

In the New Year however, the Viet Cong had begun re-establishing a presence in Binh Bah. There were problems with mounting the operations, however and that was the Viet Cong would be very cautious about the presence of Australian troops or any mention of Australian operations. It would take one word to slip out and the Viet Cong would disappear once more. The Operation was made more carefully, first with a search utilising a different route than with Darlinghurst, then by interrogating locals about the Viet Cong. In the end a twelve year old boy would state that he had been carrying messages for the Viet Cong and identified several members in the village.

The battery then moved to new position near La Son, a small village, as a part of Operation Wollongong – which was yet another series of patrols conducted by 5RAR. At the end of January, the battery moved to another position North West of Nui Dat for the same operation. 5 RAR would face heavy fire in Operation Renmark, which was a search and destroy-style operation in the Long Hai hills.

The battery deployed to two locations during Renmark, first in the wilderness surrounding the hills of Long Hai and then near the village of Hoi My. The artillery fire provided, was accurate, consistent and played a key part in securing the hills of Long Hai.

LT. Michael Langley was attached to B Company in 5RAR during the operation, acting as an FO. B COY was travelling in APCs, adjacent to a track headed south east. The APCs avoided tracks and roads because of the danger that mines presented. According to the 5RAR Association's website and the AWM, the lead vehicle suddenly went up in flames – which resulted in multiple casualties as the explosion engulfed the vehicle. The explosion was enough to hurl a twelve tonne vehicle into the air and blew a hole right through the hull. The shockwave was powerful enough to tear the rear door off the APC and the occupants were sent out the back straight after it.

Its suspected the explosion was a five hundred pounder, which were known to fail to detonate. When the VC came across these they absolutely added them to their arsenal, crafting homemade pressure plates and utilising them as mines. There's no way to be sure, but the force of the detonation leads the 5RAR association to believe that this was the case.

In response to the explosion, the APCs had swung round in an all-round defensive posture. Their priority was to get to the wounded. A large group, including the acting CSM, made their way to the lead vehicle to tend to the wounded when a second explosion was set off. Someone had detonated a second mine, resulting in more casualties. It was at this moment, with complete disregard for his own safety, LT. Langley moved across the minefield to the lead vehicle to assist the many wounded. He immediately took command of the company and secured the area whilst they waited for A Company to assist with clearing the mine field. They would be waiting for 3 hours before they could move. He was awarded the Military Cross for his actions.

Following Operation Renmark, the battery were then stationed at a Fire Support Base to the south east of Nui Dat. The Base was known simply as the Horseshoe and was established to assist multiple callsigns with cover fire throughout the various operations. The Horseshoe or Horseshoe Hill was a company position established by 5 RAR early 1967. It covered a crescent

shaped hill (hence the name) and was situated just north of the village Dat Do and 8km south east of the Task Force Base at Nui Dat.

103 Battery continued to provide support and covering fire throughout wiring operations for 5RAR. The Battery stopped supporting 5RAR on the 15th of April when they moved back to Nui Dat, to finally begin preparations to go home.

After 12 Months in Vietnam the Battery were relieved by 106th Battery on May 1st. Finally their tour was up and they made their way back home to Australia. During the tour they fired a total of 28,468 rounds.

Holsworthy

1967

In May of 1967, the Battery were posted to Gallipoli Barracks in Holsworthy. On the 19th June they became an independent Battery, much like the 53rd Battery of today in terms of tasks and set up. The battery supported the School of Artillery throughout this time with gun salutes, trials and assisting with training. The Battery received 5.5 In Guns from 104th Battery, which 103 used for field.

The following year in 1968 the Battery became a part of 19th Composite Regiment, which was in Kokoda Barracks. The moving wouldn't be over however, for the following year in 1969 the Battery were adopted by yet another parent unit when the Composite Regiment formed into the 8th Medium Regiment on August 4th. The Battery served with the 8th Medium Regiment for four years before the 8th Medium and the 12th Field Regiments formed together on the 16th November 1973

This created the 8/12 Regiment today. The newly formed 8/12 played two major roles – first as depot support for the School of Artillery and played a direct support regiment role for the 1st Task Force. This meant the work was plentiful and the days were as busy as they were long. In September of 1975 the decision was reached to help 8/12 achieve the dual role by issuing the battery with 6 M2A2 guns.

This meant that the Battery now had six 5.5In Guns as well as six M2A2 Guns. In 1984 the 5.5In Guns were replaced by the M198 – after 40 years of being in the RAA. The battery still held six M2A2s

in 1984 as well as the M198's. This set up ended when the School of Artillery moved from North Head to Puckapunyal in 1998.



Figure 1 The School of Artillery as it appeared in circa 1967. Courtesy of John Redman, 103fieldbatteryraa.net

A Snapshot of the 1990s

The 1990's provided the battery with some memorable times as it was filled with community engagement activities, competitions involving regimental gun races, sporting events and the consistent development of sub unit SOPs through multiple field trips over the years. Many unique opportunities arose, including the practice of underslung operations using CH-47 Chinook helicopters, involvement in the testing of the US Paladin SP Guns and the testing of M792 Copperhead rounds. This time moulded some of the strongest members of the Battery's history, who held a great interest in sporting events and participated in some of the most difficult exercises known in recent memory.

The Copperhead trials, conducted in 1995, in part by the 103rd Battery, sought to confirm the capability the M792 Copperhead could offer the Royal Australian Artillery as well as provide members hands on experience utilising the new ammunition type. The M792 Copperhead is a 155mm terminally laser guided projectile. For the round to function, the target must be painted with a laser designator, which once detected by the on board guidance system, sends a signal to the steering vanes, or fins, to guide the projectile onto the target. This round was the predecessor to the current SMART munitions.



Figure 1 Bravo Detachment, 1997, courtesy Greg Northey



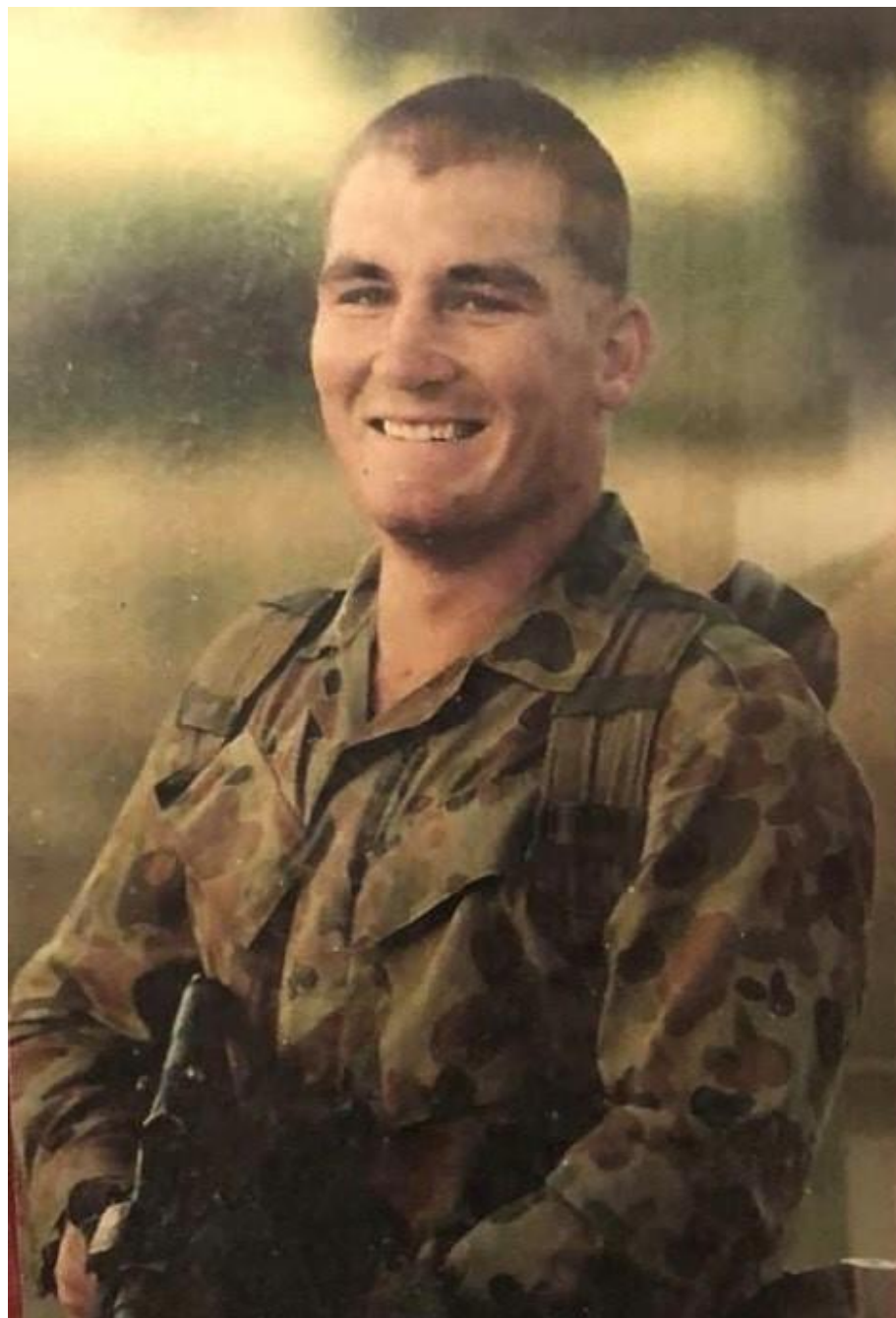
Figure 17 The Battery on Anzac Day pictured with the veterans of 2/1 Artillery Association. 1997 Courtesy Greg Northey

Figure 1 The Road Party to Darwin, 1998 Credit: Greg Northey



Figure 18 Chinook cargo lift circa 1997 courtesy Greg Northey





Ashley John Jordan “Jordo”

Perhaps the most significant event to happen to the battery at this time was the loss of Gunner Jordan, known to his friends as Jordo, who perished in a motor vehicle accident just before Christmas in 1998. Gunner Jordan enlisted to the Australian Regular Army in April of 1995 and completed 3/95 Gun Number Course at the School of Artillery North Head before being posted to Echo Gun in the 103rd Battery. He is fervently remembered as a great digger and was known well for his kindness, having been described as a bloke with a heart of gold. Many members of this time share many memories of him on the rugby field.

“You knew when Jordo tackled you,” Rik Burford, an old colleague said, “Felt like a freight train just hit you.” He was tough as nails and a hard worker. He would have bench pressed a tank if you told him he needed to be done. Once he had been remediated to play hockey for rough play in rugby, but that only went on to earn himself the nickname Moses. Once he held the hockey stick he could part the entire field. Tough guy like that, nobody wanted to stand in his way.

The entire battery had been called back from Christmas Leave to attend his funeral and did not have a lot of time to prepare, but nonetheless provided a firing party who rehearsed tirelessly the night before. An entire coach filled with members attended his funeral at the Surf Life Saving Club at Hat Head. Rest well Gunner Jordan, gone but never forgotten. Ubique.

INTERFET - 1999

East Timor around this time was known as Portuguese Timor and was an overseas province of Portugal for over 300 years. Portugal withdrew from East Timor in 1975 and according to the *Australian Guardian*, this was the spark that ignited rivalry between local groups. Fretilin forces would eventually declare the country independent after 3 months of brutality and civil unrest. Indonesia invaded 9 days later.

7th December 1975, the Indonesians invaded East Timor as a part of Operation Lotus. Their ideals flew under the flag of anti-colonialism and the invasion would lead to an occupation that lasted for twenty five years. Indonesia took advantage of the political unrest within Timor to annexe the country, stating they were concerned that an independent Timor, free from Portuguese influence, would turn to a communist country that would pose a threat to the Indonesians.

The fighting that ensued caused the deaths of anywhere between 100,000 – 180,000 people – both civilians and soldiers alike. 18,600 of these were violent killings, 84,200 were due to death from disease or starvation. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was the first to recognise the atrocity of the occupation, but the UN denied it and the world continued to look the other way. The Indonesian President Saharto continued to stage peaceful visits on the world screen, but behind the lens was the violence and atrocities wreaking havoc amongst the East Timorese.

In 1991, footage of the Santa Cruz Massacre is leaked where 100 people were shot down at a funeral procession providing a rare glimpse into the true nature of the occupation. Over the next few years freedom fighters who retreated to the mountains were eventually caught and the goal of freedom for the East Timorese slipped further and further away as the violence continued. In 1998, Indonesia experienced heavy street protests – which saw the

President resign be replaced by President Habibi, who was open to autonomy for the East Timorese.

Back in Darwin, a certain vibe had welcomed the new year of 1999 in. Australia had enjoyed a period of peace for many years at this point in history and so the ADF's involvement in international concerns at this time was rather minimal compared to the operational theatres of previous decades. The sporadic trip to Somalia or other peacekeeping operations weren't unheard of at this time, but those opportunities were officer centric. That began to change in 1999 and as early as February it was clear to the upper echelons of the 103rd Battery that something could be brewing as lead in training began developing from thin air.

For those outside the know, the BC included, a feeling or a vibe gripped the Brigade that something was about to go down but nobody was sure what. The UN began talking about a referendum for East Timor and not long after more exercise activity happened, especially in nearby Darwin. These activities began ramping up until they switched gears and a focus on peacekeeping operations came into play.

International pressure for a referendum for East Timor grew and on August 30th The UN oversaw a ballot for independence. 78% of the East Timorese population vote for independence and the transition was set to begin. The Indonesian militias, supported by Indonesian security forces, who terrorised the local population preceding the vote suddenly respond with more brutal attacks. They detain and kill thousands over the three weeks following the vote.

The violence following the referendum finally made it clear to the 103rd Battery as to why everybody had been sensing something on the horizon, however it still wasn't clear what kind of role they would be required to play. The violence suggested the need for an infantry style role, but the UN's jurisdiction spoke to the need for peacekeepers. 3 RAR and 2/4 are the first to deploy alongside

elements of A Battery to assist with local security and establish a presence.

According to 103rd Battery Commander Major Graeme Finney, the push required to fill spots was enormous and required a daily effort to check availability and sell the need for gun numbers. Commanding Officer of 5/7 RAR LT COL Simon Gould had a great personal interest in artillery and wanted to involve the battery as much as possible. The offer from Major Finney was too good to turn down as it released pressure from the LT COL Gould to fill numbers. Instead of assigning roles for the sake of it, he could enjoy the flexibility of using the 103rd Battery's numbers so he could freely assign his best members to where they needed to be. The effort required to fill the vacancies was in no small way massive.

The lead up training focussed heavily on peacekeeping operations, information about Timor and the political situation as it became clearer a deployment was in fact happening. FO teams were selected to be re-rolled as a Civil Military Liaison (CML) and a large amount of learning had to be done in a short time to prepare members to fill their new out of corps roles. Flexibility is a large emphasis on the battery of today, who have served the community in every crisis of the 2010s and early 2020s, but in the late 90s it was highly unusual.

On October 7th 1999, select groups of the 103rd Battery deployed to East Timor by air with the wider regiment under the 5th/7th Battalion Group as part of INTERFET (International Force East Timor). The Battery provided members to fill spots as vehicle drivers, filling agreed upon vacancies within 5/7's various Companies as well as Regimental Police whose straightforward role saw them primarily performing security operations around headquarters and the CML was integrated within their companies. The arrival of the battery and 5/7 allowed the other battalions to move out to the western borders of Timor and facilitate the arrival of other international forces.

The primary area of operations was Dili, the capital, and the battery predominantly deployed there in 1999 but spent a small amount of time in the western border towards the end of the first rotation.

INTERFET was a multi-nation effort, primarily consisting of Australia, New Zealand and Thailand. Other countries involved included Brazil, Canada, Fiji, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the United States and more. Operating under the United Nations umbrella was a challenging endeavour and at times frustrating. The Battery's CML was at one point even criticised for being too active in its role when the expectation was that since they were military they should stay in their lane.

This of course was not the Battery's style whatsoever. Matt Anderson and his CML party discovered valuable intelligence in terms of the East Timorese Society and Political Structures which informed the wider Battalion's operations. The 103 CML worked with the UN Food Programme to revise the fundamentals of how food aid was provided and were favourably given the lead to distribute a month's worth of food aid to civilians in a 24 hour period. This freed the members up to conduct traditional security tasks and to enjoy some down time, which was hard to come by. The tempo in Timor was incredibly high and the demands of the operation were taxing on all members involved.

The battery across all levels from BC down were subjected to many disconcerting things throughout their stay. This included acts of vigilante violence as well as interactions with victims who had been accused of working with the militia. Many members of the public had been subjected to violence behind closed doors for a variety of reasons including taking advantage of the political situation to settle old scores.

This occurrence of violence is what made the stadium in Dili a noteworthy landmark, which had been converted to become a refugee camp to house those displaced by the unrest. A stadium however is not designed to house people and reportedly had

become, for lack of a better term, a cesspool. The 103rd Battery's CML was keen to turn the refugee camp to a stadium again, which would ultimately demonstrate a return to normalcy to the locals as well as a sense of INTERFET's progress. With the logistical nature involved with issuing safehouses and providing repatriation efforts as well as clean-up it was a slow process.

After much effort from all sectors involved, the conversion was eventually achieved. This was even to a standard high enough to host the *Tour of Duty Concert for the Troops* on the 21st December 1999, headlined by none other than Kylie Minogue for approximately 4000 people. Compered by comedy duo Roy and HG, the concert featured acts by John Farnham, Doc Neeson, Gina Jeffreys, James Blundell, The Living End, Dili Allstars and the RMC Band. Peter Carthew, the BC's ack at the time had also spent enough time backstage to score himself a photo with Kylie Minogue.

Surrounding the main stadium was also a free concert from a Rastafarian who had deployed across to Dili. The atmosphere was colourful and excitable, so much so that the main stadium doors had to be blocked with an APC to prevent access. A bombardier from the 103 CML had jumped up onto the stage of the free concert, much to the musician's surprise. They were teasing and dissing him as he stood in front of the mike but he took the stage with Green Day's *Time of Your Life* and to everyone's surprise the locals were absolutely enthralled. The musicians revoked their previous statements immediately and backed him up on the song.

This time spent in Timor for the Battery as a whole was able to set the stage to allow East Timor to develop as an independent nation and to allow sufficient space to allow democracy to emerge. Additionally, facilitating reconstruction after significant devastation was a hallmark of the battery's contribution and hopefully to allow peace to return. The BC of the time, MAJ Finney, said that looking back they provided a good opportunity to the East Timorese, it was by no means perfect, but we haven't had to go back since. The Battery's deployment in 1999 set up the other

deployments for success as they continued rotations and above all it demonstrated the value of a combined arms team as prior to this the artillery corps was seen exclusively as people who fired guns.

MAJ Finney handed over to BC Craig Farini, who would see out the rest of the deployment and on February 21st 2000, the operation transitioned into the United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor (UNATAET) operation called Operation Tanager. The Battery then became the first RAA unit to serve not only on a UN operation, but also under UN command. The Battery provided the entire Civil Military Liaison element for the 5th/7th battalion for the duration of the operations.

Chapter 5: The Modern Gunner

Operation Citadel 2002

On return from the tour in East Timor, the battery began focussing on moving into the new facilities of Robertson Barracks and the reforming of the 101st Battery, where it would eventually be established in the 1st Brigade in the year 2000. The battery supported other units within the 1st Brigade as well as the Deployable Battle Group – as the situation in East Timor was not yet at a stage where it could be deemed safe. East Timor was now governed by the UN who oversaw the country's transition into independence.

Members of the battery, including Major Haebich –BC 103- would continue to periodically deploy to East Timor on Operation Citadel throughout late 2002. Operation Citadel was a major deployment of Australian Combat Battalion Groups (AUSBATT) to support the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNIMSET) Peacekeeping Force from 2000 until May 2005. The 103rd Battery's specific contribution to Operation Citadel went from September 2002 until May 2003 as a part of AUSBATT VII and provided a Civil Military Affairs Group as well as being based with the 5/7 RAR Battle Group. The 5/7 Battle Group assumed the role of AUSBATT VII from 3 RAR (AUSBATT VI) on the 25 October 2002.

Initially, the deployment saw FO parties take up traditional security roles, such as supporting the Fijian Infantry Companies as well as establishing security in destabilised regions towards the western borders, however this changed approximately half way through the deployment in around December 2002. They fell under the command of the existing CO of the Battalion LTCOL Mick Tucker and the first phase consisted of a simple organisation where each of the FOs in their respective infantry companies were rerolled as a CMA team. The roles and responsibilities of

AUSBATT VII were extremely wide and so in addition to this, a party was integrated into the Battalion QRF as well as an element of a Humanitarian Assistance (HA).

According to CAPT Paul Winters, who was chiefly involved in the Humanitarian Assistance elements, the attitude the locals had towards the ADF had shifted almost immediately and the people in his area of operations were at times amongst the most warm and welcoming. The HA element's role concerned working closely with the locals in order to rebuild certain structures, but this didn't come without challenges because the sudden change of focus was disruptive to the original role CAPT Winter's party would be playing and now the responsibility of rebuilding had been thrust into the Captain's hands. Reorganising and motivating his team of FOs, he was suddenly destined to move out of his AO back to Dili to acquire funds.

With his FO Party in tow, he moved back to Dili via a Russian helo and set to work visiting various embassies, including the British and New Zealand embassies, as well as the World Bank in order to secure donations for the mission. It totalled near a million dollars in cash, which was stuffed into every pocket, pouch or bag the FOs had on them. This funding was vital to completing the HA mission, which was used to secure local materials and hire local labour for the betterment of the engineering elements. Their projects were significantly improved thanks to the effort and construction could get underway.

CAPT Winter's team built up to a total of twenty schools, a fish farm, and headmaster's offices amongst other things. It was important to CAPT Winters, however, to give agency to the locals, saying it was essential to offer the choice of what could be built next. Schools were a popular choice amongst the burnt out husks of the buildings, destroyed by riots and violence, as it had a direct and immediate effect on the community, getting kids off the street and adults back into teaching. Not only that, but it was important for the locals to be able to choose their own materials, something

that they were familiar with and could maintain after the Battalion had left. At some stage after his HA element had gained tremendous momentum in construction work he'd even handed back the ADF's 110 Land Rovers as local trucks were better suited to moving large amounts of materials.

In order for the Timorese to one day independently protect their own borders it was an essential goal of the Battalion's to foster their training. To achieve this, an element of the Timorese Police named the Timor Border Protection Unit was stationed with the Battalion. They would participate in border patrol training with the intention to one day take over from AUSBATT altogether. The Battalion not only had a key role in training that force but there was also an FO party that acted as a liaison to the police – both UN Police and Timorese Police. They'd perform these duties whilst also maintaining traditional security tasks and it was blatantly obvious that some people would skip the borders at night to avoid detection.

Early 2003 however saw the battery deploy to RCB with the BK Captain Wendt. The Battery would continue normally by attending multiple field exercises and community engagement events throughout the years, including an official welcome from the City of Palmerston offering the 8/12 Regiment freedom to the city. The 1st Brigade has been the battery's home for over twenty years and the battery has enjoyed a good relationship with the local council ever since. The regiment's M2A2's – now salute firing guns – have been highly anticipated by the public for appearing at the annual Bombing of Darwin commemorations, as well as the Queen's Birthday and Australia Day. The battery periodically makes community engagement a priority, having hosted a number of events.

Iraq 2005- Al Muthana Task Group - 2

The Army Special Forces Task Group in Western Iraq withdrew from the area in 2003 following the Australian Government's decision to switch gears in their commitment to the region. The Australian Government had decided to cease contributions to providing security on the ground and instead moved to provide Iraq with the Australian Army Training Teams as well as a number of military staff to protect Australia's Diplomatic and Military Staff in Baghdad. This change of focus came as the Australian Government had agreed to a request from the British and Japanese Governments to assist in providing a secure environment for the Japanese reconstruction groups as they made plans to assist in the Al Muthana province. This province was a part of the British area of operations, previously secured by the Dutch and was a very large but relatively poor rural province populated by the Shiite peoples of the Shia branch of Islam. The province at this time was known to be one of the more stable regions but was at times unpredictable as locals became frustrated at the slow pace of reconstruction efforts.

On the 22nd February 2005 the Prime Minister Hon John Howard made the announcement that the Australian Army would assist with the betterment of Iraq. The Australian Army task group deployed to Al Muthanna province, South Iraq. The task was to provide a secure working environment for the Japanese Reconstruction and Support Group as they were performing essential humanitarian tasks as well as rebuilding local areas. The secondary task was to train the local Iraqi Army so that they could one day take over the role of defending their country – a role the ADF still plays to this day, albeit under the name Task Force Taji.

The Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG) was an army combined arms battle group established in April of 2005 and had two primary focuses. One: to provide security to the Japanese reconstruction efforts and two: to assist in the training of the Iraqi army. The first rotation utilised the 2nd Cavalry Regiment's HQ elements which were supported by the 101st Battery and was made up of some 450 personnel, most of which were dedicated to the security focus in dismounted operations. On the second six month rotation of AMTG, the 103rd Battery began supporting the 5th/7th Battalion in training the Iraqi Army until June 2006. During the same time the battery also deployed its Joint Offensive Support Coordination Centre (JOSCC) and FO parties lead by BC 103 MAJ S Jenkins. 131 STA Battery's Weapon Locating Radar and UAVs also came under the umbrella of the 103rd Battery's commitment, meaning the battery commanded the ADF's first ever deployment of UAVs on war-like operations.

The AMTG overall was highly mechanised, featuring over 40 ASLAVs and up to 10 PMVs. The first two rotations were drawn primarily from the 1st Brigade, but it was understood that the third and final was manned from both the 3rd and 7th Brigade. Members of the training teams responsible for the betterment of the Iraqi army however were drawn from across the ADF, from Private to Lieutenant Colonel. The AMTG only deployed for two 6-month long rotations, however the Australian Government made commitments in March 2006 to extend the ADF's presence until at least late 2007 and finally once the Japanese reconstruction elements withdrew, the Australian elements were then transferred from Al Muthana to Tallil Airbase in the nearby Dhi Qar region.

The AMTG was observed by delegates from the Australian Government Mr Barry Haase MP and Hon Bruce Scott MP to be of very high morale and made a very positive contribution to the security of the region. This task group not only secured the region but provided support in the bolstering of the capability of the Iraqi brigade through the acquisition of equipment, development of doctrine and improvement of core skills. The 103rd Battery's footprint on the ground may have been small but significant contributions were made, the impact of which set the 3rd rotation up for success. Although some time was spent out of conventional artillery roles and responsibilities the Battery has justification in feeling immense pride of having served in a climatically and politically challenging environment over the course of high summer.

Operation Anode 2006

Unresolved issues of land alienation from the era of colonialism continued to be felt in the Solomon Islands despite having achieved independence from the UK in 1978. This eventually led to disputes over traditional owners demanding compensation over the use of land which eventually escalated to violence between 1998 and 2003. On the island of Guadalcanal, leaders wanted to secure the return of all land titles to the traditional owners which was alienated by government action or otherwise claimed illegally. They also demanded the establishment of a state government in order to have control over the sale and use of the previously mentioned land as well as payment for the murder and disruption of the way of life for indigenous peoples. This led to a very large international security contingent to be established in 2003, which was led by both the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force under Operation Anode, which saw six other Pacific Nations join in on the efforts.

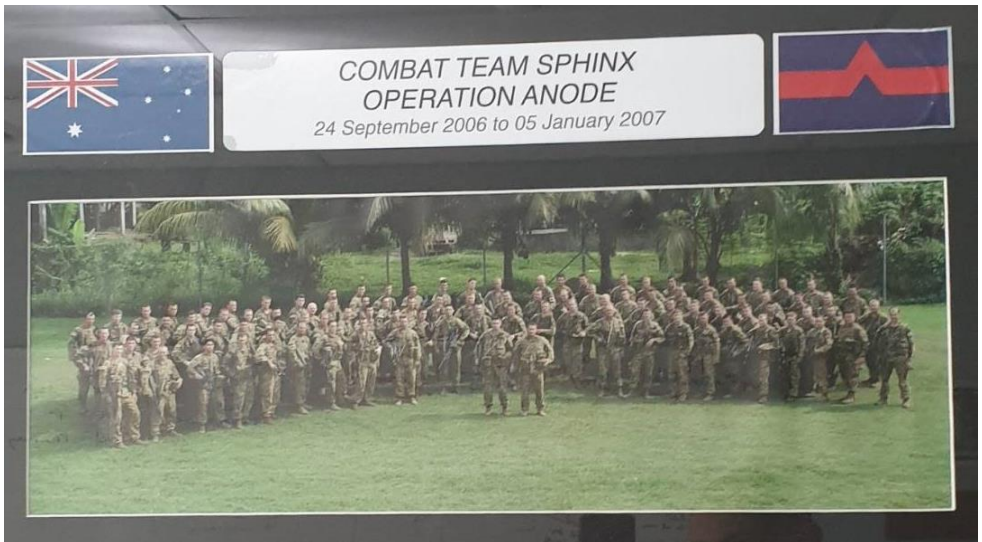


Figure 1. Combat Team Sphinx ready to deploy to the Solomon Islands. Courtesy of the 103rd

The structure consisted of up to 2,200 personnel, comprised of soldiers and police officers whose commitments began on 24th July 2003. They were well equipped, utilising vehicles and support elements from across the Pacific. This included the use of HQ Elements from 2 RAR, eight Iroquois Helicopters from 3rd Squadron Royal New Zealand Air Force and 171 Operational Support Squadron Australian Army. There were also support elements from the use of UAVs.

In 2006, riots in Guadalcanal were sparked following the election of Snyder Rini as Prime Minister amidst allegations the outcome was fixed through under the table bribery and other insinuations. This inevitably saw the justification of bolstering the commitment on the ground in Guadalcanal and a company sized infantry group was required to deploy. Issues surrounding colonialism were still deeply felt during this time of unrest and criticisms against the Solomon Islands government flew harshly, some even stating the government were facilitating Australia's domination of the Islands. He resigned just 8 days after the election before MPs were able to cast a vote of no confidence, which is a testament to unrest present at all levels in the Solomon Islands communities.

The Regional Assistance Mission To Solomon Islands (RAMSI) increased its numbers from the 20th April 2006 to provide a further 200 troops and 30 police officers. The 101st Battery assisted by filling this commitment in May 2006 until the 103rd Battery relieved them in September. The role they played included joint training and security patrols with the AFP and Solomon Islands Police. Each platoon conducted independent remote island patrols supported by the AFP's rotary wing assets. They assisted local police with security, medical support and transport related tasks. In December the battery were relieved by a Reservist Infantry Company, specifically 25/49 Royal Queensland Regiment, returning home in the new year of 2007 and taking a well-earned break.

Despite working over the Christmas break, however, the year of 2007 had only just begun. The battery would attend exercise

Southern Reach in Cultana via train. Shortly after that, in May, the battery would deploy again on an exercise in Mt Bunday where they would receive and test its first Bushmaster as the BCP. During this exercise they also conducted live firing / coordination with the use of a UAV.



Figure 1 BC Tac group 2006 in Solomon Islands. Courtesy of the 103rd Battery private collection

Iraq Overwatch Battle Group (West) – 3

The Battery Commander at the time and TAC group, led by MAJ James Kerr, deployed to Iraq in May 2007 as a part of Overwatch Battle Group (West)-3, meaning for the remainder of the year the Battery were under the care of the BSM, WO2 Clayton Richards and a few LT.s. Overwatch Battle Group (West) was an Australian Army battlegroup that consisted of Australia's largest contribution to the Multinational force in Iraq. The battlegroup itself was established in July of 2006 and drew numbers from the final rotation of AMTG following the handover of Camp Smitty to Iraqi Forces. This raised the total Australian strength in southern Iraq to over 500 personnel. Overwatch Battle Group West's main role was to provide support to the Iraqi Security Forces in a crisis if requested.

The Battlegroup was never called upon, however it did conduct combat and security operations within An Nasiriyah and As Samawah, the capitals of Dhi Qar and Al Muthana. This included patrolling on MSRs utilising the equipment transferred from AMTG-3, counter IED threats, mentoring Iraqi Army and Police and construction work. The Battle Group's training team was responsible for providing basic training to the Iraqi Army at the Basic Training Centre in Tallil.

The 103rd Battery's contribution to Overwatch Battle Group (West)-3 included deploying its JOSCC and JFT's in support of 5/7 battalion's combat teams deploying to Tallil. The role of 5/7 was to conduct further security and training tasks in Al Muthana and Nasariyah. They worked closely with the Iraqi Army and Police force to ensure the quality of training they received was at an acceptable standard. Additionally, the battery supplied bushmaster drivers and signallers. At the end of the tour they were relieved by OWBG-4 in November of 2007 – the last battle group deployed to Iraq. The last rotation came as Labour Party Leader Kevin Rudd delivered on promises made in the 2007 election in which the Australian combat forces would finally come home. The Australian

combat forces began withdrawing from Iraq from June 2008, after having trained over 33,000 Iraqi soldiers.

Afghanistan – Bull's Troop 2007

In October of 2007, 15 gunners from 8/12 Regiment were selected for secondment to the British Army for one year, 8 of whom came from the 103rd Battery (the rest being 101st). They departed for 7 Parachute Regiment, RHA based in Colchester, Essex. For six months the RAA with their British counterparts attended multiple exercises whilst they trained on the British L118 guns. The exercises were held across England, Scotland and Wales during the tail end of the year and the conditions proved to be freezing and arduous to anyone – let alone a Darwin local.

The battery were destined for FOB Armadillo (Later renamed FOB Budwan), which resided in the Upper Gereshk Valley of the Helmand Province, Afghanistan. The FOB was created by the 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards (a British Army Foot Guards Regiment) and the Danish Forces alongside FOB Sandford, FOB Keenan and FOB Price. A popular Danish documentary named “Armadillo” was filmed during the deployment and followed a group of Danish Guard Hussars stationed there.

Anthony Lloyd, a writer from *The Times* recounts the founding of FOB Armadillo in an article he published on 21 January 2008. He first describes the original structure before the arrival of the British and Danish. Afghan locals lived within it, tending livestock and performing their activities for daily living – almost 50 of them. They were the extended family of five brothers. These people were farmers and had lived in the area for generations, with their ancestors buried in a cemetery on a hill just outside their compound. Their day would start just like any other.

But, unknown to them, that day would be the day a contingent of British and Danish soldiers arrived. Their home would be the focal point of Operation Thunder, an ambition of the British and Danish to establish a foothold in a chunk of territory in the Taliban heartland: the Upper Gereshk Valley, Helmand. This compound

was the intended base for FOB Armadillo. The 50 or so Afghan locals would have to leave.

The Danish lead the negotiations whilst the British provided security and the 5 brothers would agree to move on the basis of compensation. It's reported that the Danish agreed to pay a four figure sum in dollars, followed by a monthly rent for the use of the compound. The deal was struck and the Afghan locals would leave. At this time in January, Helmand saw the entire province covered in freezing rain and so it left a horrible aftertaste in the mouths of those British soldiers who were there to witness the Afghan locals leave their home. Captain Jamie Russel, commander of the Coldstream Guards said "...The sight of an 8 year old girl walking out of her home into the rain with a watering can in one hand and a chicken in the other, knowing that you have been somehow responsible for that. A lot of the blokes felt bad about it..."

This origin story, however harrowing, would be far into the past by the time the battery arrived at FOB Armadillo. Danish troops arrived in Afghanistan in 2002, the Battery's first tour is documented as 2008. The FOB was fully operational on the arrival of the battery, the original farm was now an expansive and defensive strongpoint. The FOB boasted battlements, sangars, accommodation, gun positions, an aid post and a helicopter pad.

In 2008, under the name RAA Troop – Afghanistan 1st, were embedded into I Parachute Battery (Bulls Troop RHA) and deployed to FOB Armadillo in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. They would become the Direct Support Battery to Battlegroup Centre. FOB Armadillo left a lot to be desired, no accommodation outside of hesco shelters, kitchens and toilets were plastic bags and the temperatures soared to 55 degrees regularly. For the first three months all was quiet and the only support required was the occasional illumination mission.

The "fighting season" began in June and everything changed very quickly – most of all the tempo. Danger close and counter battery fire became a daily occurrence. The troop fired 2,911 rounds during

153 fire missions over the course of their tour. They fired in support to Patrol Base Attal, held by Royal Irish Operational Mentoring Team, as close as 60m from troops who had no overhead protection in order to provide final protective fire – on several occasions. The Troop returned to Australia via the UK in October 2008.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Figure 27 Soldiers of 1 Field Regiment, RAA at FOB Armadillo (later renamed Budwan). As photographed, it can be observed that the FOB left a lot to be desired. Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial, awm.gov.au



Figure 28 Accommodation within FOB Armadillo wasn't ideal. Courtesy of Australian War Memorial, awm.gov.a

2008

During early 2008, whilst members were deployed to Afghanistan, an FO party deployed to RCB 81. Concurrently the RAA was focusing on introducing AFATDS (Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data Systems) through Land 17 Phase 1A. Land 17 Phase 1A consisted of the Department of Defence seeking approval to provide new and upgraded facilities to support the introduction of the M777A2 Howitzers. They would have to provide new facilities suited to the organisational changes required to introducing the new gun to the ADF and procure 35 M777A2 and introduce AFATDS. Phase 1B consisted of the procurement of the Digital Terminal Control System (DTCS). The 103rd Battery underwent the transitions necessary to enter the digital age.

103 Battery personnel also redeployed to East Timor in September 2008 as a part of the 5th Battalion lead rotation of the Timor-Leste Battle Group. Their roles varied from operations staff to signallers.

Life in the Battery had a high tempo, between deployments to Malaysia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Solomon Islands and East Timor, as well as the procurement of new digital systems as well as training in those systems it was a challenge to offer some stability. The training in the new systems required exercises to be held and the tempo of the modern gunner's life was considerably high during this phase of rapid deployment and improvement.

Afghanistan – Brumby Troop 2009

On the 12th of March 2009, 15 more members from 8/12 would be deployed to the UK to form the 4th iteration of the RAA Troop, known as Brumby Troop. This time they were embedded into 1RHA at Tidworth Barracks, Wiltshire – just down the road from the Royal School of Artillery. In mid-August forward elements of the troop deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan and were to completely occupy FOB Armadillo by mid-September.

Brumby troop provided fire support to Danish Tank Forces in constant missions across numerous planned operations, which included troops in contact in the Green Zone – specifically the Adin Zai AO. Brumby Troop – which was chiefly comprised of 103 members – held a fierce reputation for accurate, aggressive and timely responsive fires in support of all those who required it. They fired 1027 rounds utilising smoke, HE and Illum from the L118 guns during the 6 month tour.

In Mid-March the Brumby Troop left Hemland to go back to Tidworth Barracks, arriving in April where a well-deserved decompression commenced in Cyprus. The Troop were presented with British Operational Service Medals with the Afghanistan clasp and formally farewelled by 1RHA during what has been described as a very moving parade and church service. Operation Herrick XI experienced some of the worst losses of British and Danish troops since operations commenced. The Troop arrived back in Darwin on the 23rd April 2010.

Meanwhile, back at home, in March of 2010 the 103rd Battery JFECC concentrated with the 5th Battalion as part of its lead-up training for the second rotation of the Mentoring Task Force. They would deploy in October 2010. Additionally, in April the 101st Battery played a significant role in establishing the Afghan School of Artillery as a part of the Second Artillery Training Team –

Kabul. The 101st Battery was supported by officers, warrant officers and senior NCOs from the 103rd Battery. The Second Artillery Training Team came into operational theatre in November of 2010.

In the new year of 2011 the RAA decided to change the regimental structure to increase the batteries to accommodate a lone Gun Battery and three Observer Batteries. The currently deployed members of 103 Battery (part of MTF-2) formed 115 Battery. This tour held an extremely high tempo, 300 rounds of the US M777 Howitzers, 200 rounds of the Afghan D-30's and 200 rounds of the Australian 81mm mortars were fired. One FO Ack received heavy wounds during this tour, as well as Bombardier D. Robertson of 102 Battery being awarded the Medal of Gallantry for his actions.

All 8/12 Regiment members left Afghanistan in June or July of 2011 to finally take some leave, that was well overdue and rightly earned.



*Figure 1 Major Cooper of the 103rd Battery with an Afghani Forward Observer from 4/4/405 Hero Corps firing a registration near Charmestan Valley, Uruzgan province, Afghanistan.
Figure 1 Brumby Troop's photo as it appears in the guard room today. Original photo*

Today's Gunline

2013

The 5th Battalion in 2013 assumed the role of the Ready Battle Group, which was the first time the responsibility has been claimed outside of the 3rd Brigade. As a part of the Ready Battle Group, the 103rd Battery provided members to form a full Gun Battery and CLOG to the 5 RAR battle group. The Battery for the most part, however, could enjoy participating in various activities such as sporting events, military skills competitions and adventure training.

Life in the battery became more stable as they were no longer required for deployments. Several courses became priority as well as small team developments. The Battery typically deploys to Mount Bunday on training exercises, as well as Shoalwater Bay, Cultana and in one instance in 2014 to Hawaii. Rim of the Pacific was a 4 month long exercise in Hawaii and the Battery also provided members for an exchange with the Indonesian army.

The first major gunnery exercise for 2013 was held during March in Cultana during Exercise Thunder Walk/Run with the explicit purpose of being the lead up training to Exercise Kite Hawk in April. Offensive Support was provided as part of 101 Composite Battery, six guns in total, of which 103 helped to make up the numbers. Elements of the Adelaide based 102 Coral Battery also deployed to this exercise.

When Exercise Kite Hawk came around Joint Fires Teams deployed to Mount Bunday Training Area to conduct live fire training utilising the Tiger helicopters from 161 Squadron, 1 Aviation Regiment in April. Prior to this, JFTs spent training sessions in 161 Sqn's flight simulation centre. This gave soldiers a solid understanding of the aircraft's munitions and capabilities, as well as discuss tactics. 103rd Battery's own Bombardier Michael Krek said the exercise was a great opportunity to the soldiers. They could practise day and night time engagements as well as plenty of

30mm and 70mm ammunition to play with. Utilising infrared pointers, the JFTs could talk on the pilots of the Tigers to the targets, especially in low light conditions.

2014

2014 saw the 103rd Battery operate in the reset phase, which means members can enjoy a focus on courses and individual development. Only three major exercises were conducted during that year, however, each was significant as they deployed to Mount Bunday to attend Exercise Thunder Run 1 and 2 as well as Far North Queensland on Exercise Hamel. Those exercises held an emphasis on junior leadership development, testing the bombardiers of the battery to perform at their best. The battery also achieved M777 underslung operations, making the guns air mobile!

The gunline and CP were exposed to danger close in the observation post as well as experiencing live fire defence of the gun position in combined arms serials. They also achieved the safe conduct of arduous training of the highest order coming in the form of food and sleep deprivation, urban operations training and operational flights on the P-3 Orion.

The Battery also provided the first Joint Fires and Effects Coordination Centre to an Aviation Battle Group as well as providing personnel for an exchange with the Indonesian army. The battery provided support in an exceptional manner to the Royal Military College, Recruit Training Centre and School of Artillery through various means. After all the key activities were successfully completed and after conducting many courses the year finally came to a close with the opening of the MC Langley Club as the Battery Boozer – of which its still named today. The battery of this time is still remembered through a commemorative plaque on the wall of the Brew Room.

2015

This year saw the 103rd Battery undergo a series of individual training courses and filling external support requests. The highlight of the year for the battery is the attachment of His Royal Highness Prince Harry to the Bty for Ex Thunder Observer at Kangaroo Flats. They didn't stop there, however, for they continued their trend for innovative and exciting training with Exercise Vigilant Scimitar with the 1st Aviation Regiment. This exercise in particular saw the conduct of airmobile training across the Northern Territory, including sending guns to Mount Bundy and observers to support Tiger ARH to Delamere Air Weapons Range. The tempo died down slowly with exercises in May and August at Mount Bundey and finally there was an exercise in Cultana in October – all of which were concerned with low-level training.

The lowest point for the Battery in 2015 was the shocking death of Captain Matthew Manning, a Forward Observer and JTAC in what was a horrific accident. The Battery offered its officers, many of whom close friends, to support the Manning family at his funeral on the Gold Coast. More than 400 people packed Mary



Immaculate Church in Ashmore on the Gold Coast for his funeral. His photo still hangs on the wall of Battery Headquarters to this day.

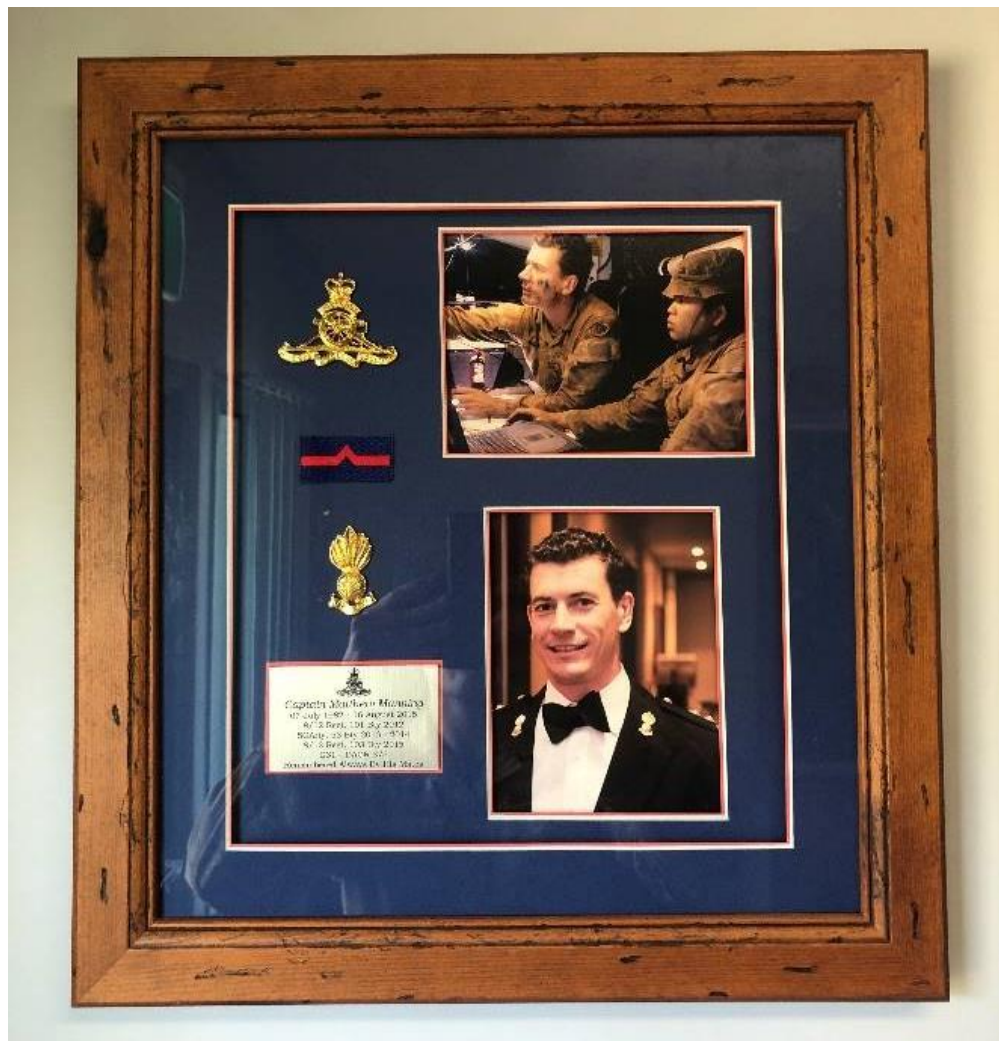


Figure 1 Captain Manning's memorial as it sits today in 103 Battery. Original Photo.

2016

2016 saw the battery participate in Exercise Koolendong at Bradshaw Training Area, which saw them shoot in support of the trilateral forces on the ground. ADF, USMC and French Armed Forces of New Caledonia participated in the exercise designed to foster interoperability. Not only that but the battery also participated in Exercise Hamel, held in Cultana which saw participation from ADF, UK, US and Canadian forces of which the battery provided indirect fire support as well as practicing infantry minor tactics.

The battery also conducted M777 underslung operations in air mobile missions across Cultana.

Afghan National Army Officer Academy

Australia's role with the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) was in support of the NATO-led Resolute Support mission. With an impressive manning of 300 ADF personnel, the support for ANAOA came under Operation Highroad. Operation Highroad itself commenced January 2015 when Afghanistan started to show signs it could take the lead on its own security, however the ADF (alongside coalition nations) would continue to assist in the development of counter terrorism forces, traditional security roles and bolstering defence initiatives. All of this came under a collective effort to contain the threat from international terrorism and provide support to the Afghan Government.

115 Battery would drive the rotations from 2016 – 2017 and sought members from across 8/12 REGT, however the bulk of the personnel would come from 103 Battery. The rotation would take the would-be mentors to ANAOA, located at Camp Qargha in Kabul, Afghanistan.

2017

During the course of 2017 the Battery deployed its members to Exercise Talisman Sabre, held in Shoalwater Bay in which they performed well as part of a multinational scenario to drive the enemy back. The battery's commitment was providing fire support, but due to the sheer number of people on the range and in the interest of safety the emphasis was given to establishing a digital link. This resulted in a dry practice, but the core skills and basics were still trained through realistic war-like scenarios. Battlefield updates were given regularly and although it was a dry practice the response had a real time effect on the ground, facilitated by safety supervisors and umpires.

The Battery also deployed to Cultana where it integrated with 1 CER and 5 RAR to establish interoperability in core roles and responsibilities. As a part of 1 Brigade, the Battery was expected to be prepared to deploy at a moment's notice, being part of that year's online brigade. The exercise was able to achieve multiple outcomes involving direct fire, small arms practice and weapons qualification shoots.

8/12 Regiment as a whole also hosted Gunner Bear – a charity event that raises funds for paediatric care. 104.1 Territory FM covered the event on the 20th October and it saw the Regiment haul an M2A2 by hand some 16 kilometres to the Royal Darwin Hospital. The sweltering heat of the time proved to be a challenge, but through quick changes the Regiment as a whole managed to get the job done in quick time, doing their part for children in need!

The Regiment didn't only raise money, but they also hosted a PT event for the families and wider community in which children were encouraged to participate in an array of fun military activities. These included minor obstacles, as well as a gun race conducted by the soldiers and the day ended with a well-earned barbeque.

It was a successful day which was well covered during its lead up and it culminated in raising over \$35,000 to children in need. Gunner Bear, as mentioned, goes beyond the main event of the gun push, it also involved troops engaging with the public on a regular basis as well as enlisting the help of NT Traffic and the NT Police to ensure the push was done safely. It couldn't have been done without the combined efforts of multiple arms of the Darwin community as well as working together as a Regiment to achieve this critical success.



Figure 36 8/12 Regiment on the home stretch to the Royal Darwin Hospital. Credit: NT News.



Figure 37 103rd Battery's BDR Taylor and GNR Tabuai of the 103rd Battery both prepare to take Gunner Bear to the Royal Darwin Hospital. 8/12 REGT Original photo.

GNR Matthew James

Despite all this positivity it would be improper not to mention that the Battery suffered yet another shocking death in 2017. GNR Matthew James perished on 4th February 2017, dying in a motor vehicle accident in Darwin. The Battery marked the passing of Gunner James by sending a bearer party to the funeral proceedings which were held in Brisbane. 25 members of the Regiment travelled to help the family through the loss of their son as well as to mourn. Gunner James was remembered as a hilarious bloke who was always having a laugh.

A Service was held in the Regiment some time later on the 17th April one year later. During the Regimental commemorations the Brew Room was completely cleared out to accommodate a sea of people of who stood in silence as the padre offered some comforting words. Gunner James's portrait is hung in the Battery Brew Room to this day and his name is mounted on the bar so that all can remember him.

Gunner James's death marks the sixth member the 103rd Battery has lost to the roads whilst in service. The 103rd Battery has unfortunately lost more members to motor vehicle accidents than to the Vietnam War. Those members who are left to mourn the loss of their mates always, without fail, urge others to be considerate and mindful of the road. It is a senseless and unfortunate place to die. The battery has had to learn this lesson too many times across the decades.



2018

2018 began with performing a re-enactment of the bombing of Darwin at the Esplanade. Utilising the Regiment's M2A2's, the 103rd Battery provided 4 detachments of members to return fire against the Air Force's incoming planes. The Royal Australian Navy also took up positions beyond the esplanade to recreate the visual effect of what it might have been like to witness the bombing. The experience is filled with adrenaline, but hits close to home as the crowd considered the ground they now stand on was soaked in the blood of many just 76 years before.

It's a recurring event 8/12 regiment takes part in year after year, however each rotation includes a different Battery. The experience draws hundreds on a pilgrimage to pay their respects in one of Australia's deadliest days. The City of Darwin provides one of the biggest military services you could find outside of the Australian War Memorial and was even visited by the Japanese Prime Minister.

The year was packed full of field exercises in Cultana, South Australia that focused heavily on technical gunnery, old school degraded drills and performed well under the walk, crawl, run training style. Other areas of focus included tactical care of casualties in mass cas scenarios, qualification on new equipment and qualifying shoots.

The Battery also spent time engaging with the community by hosting a display at the V8 Supercars at Hunter Valley in Darwin. This afforded members visibility in the community as well as being able to promote some of the exciting things that army has to offer.



Figure 40 The display at the V8 Supercars as it was fielded by 103 gunners. 8/12 REGT original photo.





2019

The current members of the Battery have continued to enjoy the strong relationships forged by the previous members – from the locals to the US Marines. From 2015 to today the Battery continued to provide support to the 5th Battalion on exercises across the country, from Cultana in South Australia to Shoalwater Bay in Queensland.

Exercise Koolendong that year saw the battery deploy to Mount Bunday Training Area where soldiers from 8/9 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment assaulted an enemy position sitting at the top of a steep and rocky hilltop. They fought through barbed wire and charged their position whilst live rounds echoed throughout the training area. Alpha Company, 8/9 RAR successfully assaulted their target but it would not have been possible without the large interoperability effort that had taken place over the course of 2019's Exercise Koolendong.

The exercise began with 8/9 RAR being inserted via the United State's MV22 Ospreys and they began to move several kilometres to the final objective. As they moved, United States Marines and 103 Battery fired many missions in support of their activities. Safety supervisors had been sourced from the 5th Battalion to ensure danger close procedures were conducted safely and in a timely fashion. With all measures in place, the exercise went ahead with little delay.

The French Armed Forces of New Caledonia, who were also attached to 8/9, moved independently to take a separate objective – clearing the way for 8/9 to proceed forward. In the final objective, all forces on the ground participated in taking the hilltop. Koolendon was designed to increase interoperability with the United States Marines and readiness to respond to regional crises.



Figure 41 The 103rd Battery engages in a direct fire mission. Defence News.

2020

2020 saw great disruption to training as the Coronavirus pandemic interrupted most opportunities to integrate with the community, the Marines and to conduct live fire exercises. Thankfully, the battery was able to attend Exercise Koolendong to achieve the interoperability they were quickly becoming known for.

Combined howitzers from the 103rd Battery and Kilo Battery from the MRF-D fired approximately 1200 rounds during the exercise in Mount Bunday. Three American and three Australian M777s answered the calls for fire, providing valuable training to each battery's observers as they learnt each other's proforma for calling for fire. The difference in procedure, structure and flow was eye opening to the 103rd's FSO Lt. Noack.

Lt. Noack mentioned that the American system of command and control was more centralised, giving a good indication of how a unit might operate in a large scale confrontation. FSO Lt. Noack oversaw the direction of digital missions alongside his American counterpart and before missions reached the combined gunline they had to be deferred to either the American CP or the Australian CP, which took a lot of tinkering and caused some delays. In previous years this was overridden by the use of voice, however this year's emphasis was all digital.

Lance Bomabrdier Brock Rawson, a CP supervisor, became something of an American Whisperer who understood American technology well. Having trained the previous year with the US he was able to troubleshoot many problems on the Australian end. After a few years in a row of working with the Americans the digital missions were able to take place without ever having to speak a single word on the radio.

On the gunline, the gunners of the 103rd integrated with Kilo Battery and vice versa, offering a few gunners each in an exchange-like basis in the field environment. Gunners were able to witness and understand the ways in which each battery operates as well as trade advice and training in order to refine skills. They also shared in meals, traded various items and formed friendships that ensure the future success of the RAA on ventures like these.

Operation COVID Assist

The Coronavirus pandemic swept through the world at an alarming rate in the closing days of 2019. Originating in Wuhan, China the virus would begin to spread worldwide throughout the start of 2020. Australia recorded its first case on the 25th January 2020 and this would eventually trigger the government's response to defend the economy, support the people and increase supply to the healthcare industry. In the initial days of the virus's arrival in Australia there was little difference to the ordinary life, but we had already seen many examples of what other world leaders had done well and more importantly what they had not.

It was a strange time for the Army as the beginning weeks of February started to show more and more confirmed cases. Eventually, the government decided to take drastic action in reducing the spread of the virus by enforcing social distancing, implementing self-quarantine procedures and most notably, urging people to work from home wherever possible.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison handled the economic defence, whilst the Health Minister continued to give advice day after day on the best actions to take to remain safe. The Prime Minister, based on the Health Minister's advice, set down a list of rules and left the states and territories the freedom to decide how best to handle their response. Most of his rulings were heeded by the state leaders, including the advice to reduce public gatherings down to 10.

This meant that a majority of large organisations – including the Army - would have to work from home along with the rest of the country, which was a strange and bewildering thing. The 103rd Battery continued training from home through the use of apps such as Signal and Google Classroom. Whilst at home the Battery would report in at 0730 to enforce a normal routine, conduct personal fitness (consistent with the at-home training plan) and then be given or sent artillery-related references to study before

completing at test at the end of every day. Other training included ethics and morality, battle reviews on Long Tan, Hamel and even, on a few occasions, analysing past VC's actions.

The situation in the Northern Territory was not one to be concerned about, but in the whole of Australia, especially areas with high population density, the situation deteriorated day by day. In response, the Chief of Army would eventually put out a general order to all units to launch Operation Covid Assist. Australian Army would be required to lend assistance to local police, health workers and the community. The Army's call for action required multiple units to respond. One such unit was the 8th/12th Regiment and by extension the 103rd Battery. OP COVID ASSIST began on the 1st of April 2020 and saw members of the 103rd Battery lend assistance to local police.

The Battery would undertake a multitude of tasks, including self-quarantine compliance checks with locals, manning command posts to maintain contact with multiple callsigns and enforcing travel restrictions in various locations. For the most part, the 103rd Battery spent their time at RAAF Tindal, just outside of Katherine in the Northern Territory. It was here they stayed whilst they slowly rotated through manning the Stuart highway and working with the Northern Territory Police to ensure that non-essential travel could be stopped in order to prevent the virus.

At this time Australians who were overseas when the pandemic was announced returned to the Northern Territory, where they underwent quarantine in a complex located in Howard Springs. The complex was originally built for fly-in fly-out workers. The Battery assisted the government by providing food, performing housekeeping tasks and ensuring the safety of the community.

This was a relatively relaxed time as the Northern Territory was considered the safest place in Australia, peaking out at 30 confirmed cases, all of whom recovered before the Territory reached zero cases by the 28th May 2020. The response, however, was still necessary as people with the coronavirus (or those in

quarantine) would break their restrictions by leaving their home and as a result threaten the safety of the general public. The Northern Territory police force is also small in comparison to other states, so some much needed assistance was required.

The Battery returned home after two weeks spent in RAAF Tindal and would eventually return to normal work hours after the final case was resolved. Although it was unorthodox in terms of operations, the Battery did a fine job in reducing the risk of the pandemic



Figure 1 Gunner Dobson of the 103rd Battery prepares to deliver food to the occupants of the Howard Springs complex. Protective measures were important so as not to contract the coronavirus. Courtesy of Sam Dobson.

2021

103 Battery continued to have training hampered by COVID, which was unfortunately something the Regiment as whole had to adapt to. The battery continued supporting the local community in Howard Springs on a rotational basis, providing members as they were needed. From a training perspective the battery welcomed many new members that year which meant that a back to basics approach was required as they deployed to RAAF Tindal to rehash on basic skills. Here the battery could enjoy a change of scenery as well as access to amenities in what was an innovative approach to training, providing the necessary stresses of field as well as the reprieve of modern facilities. This trip provided a solid foundation of training for the rest of the year.

Next up the battery returned to Mount Bunday to engage in multiple missions of technical shooting, including high angle, direct fire and an all-nighter mission that was fired under the light of a lunar eclipse, which tested even the more experienced gunners. The Battery continued to engage with the United State Marines, pouring a heavy focus into camaraderie and establishing lasting relationships. Throughout the year the battery continuously invited the marines to enjoy fun and games, as well as a well-deserved break in the form of a boozier parade. Such emphasis provided the groundwork for the culminating exercise at the end of the year.

Forming friendships is important and the battery understood that this year. Interoperation is impossible without friendship or camaraderie – things the Australian Army as a whole are known for. Mike Battery eagerly extended their hand in friendship and sent no shortage of invitations to seize the opportunity to spend time with the 103rd Battery. They even hosted the 103rd Battery for the first International Mayhem Games which included a host of events both physical and hilarious.

The day began with a long run around the boundary of Robertson Barracks which set the tone for the physical endeavours involved for the day. The 103rd Battery provided fierce competition in the events, which included tyre flip races, Humvee pulls and a slew of tug of war challenges. Mike Battery ended the day with some positive affirmations and the gifting of a Mike Battery Mjolnir – otherwise known as Thor’s Hammer as a token of their friendship.



Figure 43 BDR Osborne motivates the battery in the tug of war



event.

The Japanese Ground Defence Force joined in the tri-force effort that was Exercise Southern Jackaroo, which also included ADF and US Marines. This exercise had more than seven live fire traces open simultaneously as members from all three Defence Forces opened fire on enemy positions, this included the use of Javelin missile systems, Japanese LMAT anti tank missiles and the 103rd Battery's own indirect fire support. More personnel exchanges occurred throughout the three forces, moving Japanese soldiers to the 5th battalion's sections and vice versa.

The 103rd Battery utilised this exercise to test digital links with Mike Battery between gun detachments. Seeing as the battery welcomed many new members this year it was a challenge to establish the link as many members tend to take the knowledge of how American systems interact with Australians with them when they post. Despite this, both gun lines were able to successfully engage the final objectives and complete the exercise. Exercise Southern Jackaroo was a critical building block in diversifying training as well as increasing the complexity of what the 1st Brigade is able to do with international partners.

The 103rd Battery's own Bombardier Eduardo Osborne also hosted the Chief of Defence Force Angus Campbell on Bravo Gun, saying his detachment appreciated the visit. He thought it was interesting to meet a highly ranked officer you'd only see on the news and to have him on the gun as a number six was exciting. BDR Osborne was gifted a coin for the efforts.

2021 was significant in US – Australian relationships as it marked 10 years of the Marine Rotational Force Darwin and 70 years of the ANZUS treaty. It also fell on the year of the 150th anniversary of the Royal Australian Artillery – which was marked by the 101st Battery by firing the only live salute across the country.

The battery culminated all efforts in yet another Exercise Koolendong, the battery's crowning achievement over previous years, but this time it was extended to the entirety of the 1st Brigade. More than 2000 troops from the Australian Defence Force and Marine Rotational Force Darwin completed a high-end live fire warfighting exercise at Bradshaw Field Training Area in September of 2021. This exercise confirmed the ability of both forces to deploy in response to any crises in the region if required, a sentiment shared by Brigadier Ash Collingburn of the 1st Brigade.

This was a key training event of the Brigade as a whole, which enhanced the cooperation between the USMC and ADF through combined arms fire. The Battery may have played a small role in the huge machine that is MRF-D and 1st Brigade, but the 103rd supported the efforts through indirect fire and effects, sharing missions with Mike Battery and even at one stage firing out of the same position. The Battery had shared a gun position with the marines before, but what made this year different was the foundation of mateship made the environment exciting and new.

Like previous years the battery engaged out of the American FDP and Australian CP, in a combined battery of both American and Australian guns in digital fire missions. The gun position hosted an array of dignitaries who also oversaw the conduct of the missions. The enormity of the exercise demonstrated a capability to respond as a coalition force, with an integrated coalition command structure.

The achievement comes as the ANZUS treaty marks 70 years.

Farewelling the Marines in 2021 was an emotional affair and was observed over the Gunners Dinner event, which sat almost 300 people. The Gunners Dinner is a recurring event that has entertained gunners both ADF and MRF-D throughout the years, but 2021 was significant for its use of clever humour, raucous proceedings and an evening filled with laughter. A pseudo-formal event, the Gunner's Dinner encourages fun and enriches the evening with various fines or punishments. It then ends on a

solemn note as a single table draped in a black tablecloth is revealed, representing those that couldn't dine with the gunners present. It's a sobering experience, to commemorate the dead and to acknowledge previous service. It is then proceeded by a toast to each and every battle and then to each and every mate in attendance. A reminder of the friendship between us.



Figure 48 BC MAJ S Watts receives the Mike Battery hammer.

The Battery finished the year on Operation COVID Assist once again, this time filling numbers for the Joint Task Group 629 Tasmania. Stationed out of Anglesea Barracks, the battery supported various hotels in providing security for quarantining travellers – mostly international fruit pickers and the like. The commitment was minimalist in nature, but provided the Tasmanian Government the peace of mind that life could continue as normal. The Battery found this task to be more relaxing than previous trips throughout the year, able to enjoy what Hobart had to offer through local leave and the unique experiences that Army has to offer.

2021 was a successful year filled with challenges and significant successes that enhanced the capability of army as a whole. The strong relationships formed during this year resulted in army obtaining smooth operation with multi nation forces through a centralised internationally integrated command structure, of which the 103rd Battery played a role. The bonds formed went beyond mere friendships, these directly influenced results on the ground by way of how we as people interacted with each other, despite being from different backgrounds, from behind different borders or with different equipment. Through respect for one another we were able to achieve our goals for 2021 with relative ease and produce considerable results. The 103rd Battery was able to enjoy a successful year thanks to not only the efforts provided by the members but through the support given to us from our mates across the sea.



Figure 50 103 at the re-enactment of the 2021 Bombing of Darwin

2022

Another year began under the uncertainty of COVID restrictions, political discourse and the looming dread that comes with them. From the start of the year the news had been laden with stories of rampant cases and political disruptions and so a certain kind of vibe had befallen 8/12 Regiment that something was stirring. It wouldn't take long to find out what, because the New Year had ticked over and it was time to work. Members had flights delayed due to isolation requirements and had their Christmas gatherings hampered by COVID and with no time to recoup, a national crisis in the aged care sector ensued.

Upon return from Christmas leave, the entirety of 1 Brigade was faced with RSO&I briefs on the prospects of taking up a general duties role within the aged care sector across the country – an area that was swamped with overworked/underpaid staff. The order came as Prime Minister Scott Morrison sought to implement quick and radical change to the sector. The prospect was not well received across defence as it stemmed so far outside of the realm of soldierly duties, but the Battery would be ready to assist the community once more as they set their sights on Tasmanian shores.

But it was never to be. The call never came as Reservists and other units filled the gaps first. This came as a relief to some and certainly foreshadowed a rocky start to an otherwise already stressful year. That being said the Battery found no reprieve as the Regiment was called upon to serve the very next month, this time taking them to Lismore NSW.

Operation Flood Assist

As the Brigade sent members away to Operation Aged Care Assist, the biggest flood event had occurred in modern Australian history. Beginning in February, the Lismore disaster saw three significant rain events occur back to back over a four day period. Alone, these individual events would have caused a moderate flood however altogether they caused something much worse.

Families in the affected areas were caught unaware as the official warnings issued by the State Emergency Service and Bureau of Meteorology failed to indicate the potential impact. It's been written that families had moved to the second storey of their homes thinking they were safe only to find themselves inundated in rising water. 670 millimetres of rain falls in the region, rising the waterways by up to 11 meters. The floodwater breaks records at 14.4 meters high.

Command of the Battery had switched hands as well and the new Battery Commander Major Joel Oates had his work cut out for him from the get go. His approach to the task, no matter how last minute it was, made sure that the battery's efforts did not go unappreciated.

The Battery deployed with the wider Regiment under urgent haste, beginning in March and returning in April. Their time in Lismore and Casino would see them perform general duties in assisting the clean-up of flood affected communities. It was not glamorous work. It was fraught with clearing garbage, old fridges stacked with defrosted meat and soggy carpet. The clean-up was a monumental task laden with the risk of exposure to black mould, sewage and food waste.

The emotional impact of seeing Australian communities in such a state of disrepair however weighed heavily on the members of the battery. As the Battery's work took them across northern NSW and

south Queensland, one such community they assisted was Blakebrook in their efforts to restore the public school which was badly damaged in the flooding.

“It’s been confronting seeing the impact the floods have had on the community and the school.” Lieutenant Nick Jenkins said. “For my team to come in and assist, its been a privilege to help and to see the resilience of the community.”

The locals were in need of help and were grateful to receive it.

Members also remarked that during the clean-up efforts in Casino and Lismore they’d been exposed to all kinds of confronting sights including deceased animals, maggot infested whitegoods and more black mould.

The ADF had committed thousands of people to the effort and unfortunately with the election looming they were under the watchful eye of the ever sceptical public. Videos surface online that took scenes out of context, such as soldiers taking mandatory short halts on RSD’s, caused comments sections to run wild. The battery was fortunate to avoid any scandal and was well received by the community as they went about their tasks. It was not glamorous work, but the Battery didn’t do it for the praise, nor for the glory. They worked for their community.

In a politically tumultuous environment filled with highly-distressed members of the community, the battery did an excellent job in maintaining grace under pressure and acting with professionalism, setting the standard for all to see.

Following the deployment on Operation Flood Assist, the Battery had some reprieve as they observed the 150th Anniversary of the RAA on the 4th April and Anzac Day commemorations. Sporting events resumed for some time and 8/12’s Commanding Officer LT COL Trevor Watson introduced Brazilian Jiu Jitsu for combative training. He’d placed a work order the previous year to convert one of the hangars into a BJJ gym in order to facilitate this and had set

to work on train-the-trainer lessons so the Regiment could benefit in the event he was away. With everything set, some form of a normal training rhythm could finally occur.

103 Donates Bravo Gun to Ukraine

In February of 2022, the Russo-Ukrainian war of 2014 escalated as Russia launched a ground invasion into Ukraine, causing the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. At the turn of the New Year, tensions were reaching boiling points, drawing the event to the world stage and when the invasion was launched it immediately went viral. Social media was flooded with unaltered and intimate footage of warfare never before seen by the common person. Stories of refugees, soldiers seeking forgiveness, war crimes and the enduring human spirit flood the news and social media for months to come. The outcry for support to Ukraine is unanimous and the world flocks to support them.

Australia gifts 20 Bushmasters and 6 M777s to the cause alongside the US. In April, 8/12 REGT sent a team to RAAF Darwin to assist 13 SQN in loading the M777s. The team comprised primarily of 103 members and the battery itself lent Bravo Gun for the effort.



Exercise Thunder Run

The battery deployed to Cultana shortly thereafter on a Brigade exercise following the already high tempo set for the year. The cold June weather greeted the Regiment with hailing winds, spitting rain and steep mud. The exercise itself was low drag and featured the opportunity for the battery to shake out and get reps in for performing its primary role.

There was much work to catch up on as the battery found itself with the opportunity to finally train. Live range practices by day and night occurred early on, with weapons qualifications and familiarisation with weapon systems. The culmination of the exercise for the battery would focus on a live fire defence of the gun position, with blank serials deposited throughout.

Technical gunnery was also a highlight of the battery's time in Cultana, as they worked hard to hit target rounds with low allocations and disruptive traces on a tight schedule. Movement was disrupted by the wild weather as the rain continued to soften the ground and create the sludge that Cultana was known for in its winter time.

The middle of the exercise saw some reprieve however as the Regiment organised a Gunner's Dinner to reflect on the monumental effort they've been through thus far. Officers served the soldiers in the open-aired event, featuring fresh food and even live music as well as a set performed by comedian.

The much anticipated culmination of the exercise unfortunately never came as the weather had taken away the opportunity. Where possible, members filed through to observe rounds landing, but they wouldn't be up close and personal as the safety aspect was unavoidably unfulfilled to have the go ahead. Members however were still able to put down serious rates on the last day of firing to make up for frustratingly low allocations and disruptive weather.

The battery would then relax with the fresh food and soft beds in Port Wakefield's experimental and proof range via the arrangements made by BHQ. The exercise ended in a warm hearty environment with good laughs, a few well-earned drinks and a hot meal. Through good relations the battery was able to store their equipment on site until they returned in August for a subsequent exercise.

Following Thunder Run, BSM WO2 Mark Nipperess was subsequently deployed to Egypt on Operation Mazurka, handing over the role to WO2 Scott Fitzgibbon. The next round of lead up training occurred with specific focus on IMT's, leadership training and blowing off steam with teamwork and initiative days on Fridays. These consisted of viewings of HBO's *Band of Brothers* with subsequent reviews into ethical decision making, battlefield analysis, historical dives and research as lead by BC Major Joel Oates.

The battery could enjoy a good routine for the time to come. Strength training made a return in PT with fun additives like combative training, obstacle course runs and combat PT. Sport continued to come and go as the Brigade committed members to Aged Care Assist and other domestic operations of which limited members deployed to in the Perth and Sydney areas.

As the Battery enjoyed their limited time of normalcy they were now able to have time to plan and predict tasks, where domestic operations continued to snatch people up at the last second, when it came to Battery exercises they were able to finally nail down fine point details and ensure the rest of the year would be smooth sailing and incorporate as much rest as possible.

Exercise Radar Trial

In August, the battery returned to Port Wakefield's proof and experiment range to retrieve their equipment. They'd sent maintenance teams in periodic fashion to ensure the workload didn't go to their gracious host, but a few days were spent cleaning during this time as they prepared for the coming trial. Under the new BSM, the battery had access to kitchens and mess quality food as long as they cooked it themselves. No complaints were had.

After the battery had taken the equipment back to Cultana however, a maintenance injury had sent one of the members to Port Augusta hospital to have their ailment looked over. It was then confirmed that he had contracted COVID-19. This was received as a blessing at the time as a few members had been feeling unwell and if left unchecked would have been catastrophic for the trial coming on the following Monday. Six members in total had contracted COVID.

Raytheon Australia is an American owned technology company who works as a defence contractor. They are a well trusted capability partner for defence whose most notable achievements include joint fires, integrated air and missile defence and advanced testing of capability systems. The trial would see the battery become a part of joint battlespace systems testing, firing low rates to ascertain Raytheon's radar's honing capabilities as well as the subsequent dispatch of firing data for the use of counter battery fire. The battery would act as an enemy battery, fire a few rounds and test the radar's capability in this fashion. Only a few days of firing occurred over a week's period, culminating in a BC's fire plan to expend any ammunition allocated for the trial but not otherwise used.

The battery returned to Darwin at the conclusion of the trial in a staggered fashion to ensure the security of the equipment left in Cultana. This gave rise to opportunities to go on local leave and call

home as they periodically returned to the training area to commence the next exercise.

RMC Shaggy Ridge

The support to RMC's Shaggy Ridge saw the battery lend their services to the RMC cadet class in their training to learn all arm's call for fire. In a symbiotic relationship of allowing the gun line to practice technical gunnery and the students to gain real world experience. The exercise began with easy-going missions to allow the students to wrap their heads around the concept, it then ramped up when the battery were required to perform as the enemy party in an IMT's based capability.

The Death of Queen Elizabeth II

The world was shocked at the news of the passing of our Captain General Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II. To receive this news out field was even more harrowing. She served as queen for 70 years and with her loss came the accession of her son, King Charles III as King and Captain General of the RAA.

“Initially I was taken back by the news of the queen passing.” GPO Lieutenant Pieterse said. “I don’t consider myself a monarchist however the queen meant a lot to me as an ADF Member.”

The 103rd Battery fired a mission in honour of her passing and to welcome the accession of King Charles III. Alpha gun, led by BDR John Daly, had fired the mission.

“As a detachment we were not aware it would be billed as such.” BDR Daly said. The detachment had walked into it thinking it was just another fire mission in support of RMC.

“When we realised it would be the first rounds fired for the King we were all pretty stoked.” No 10. LBDR Charlie Vera added.

BDR Daly insisted that the Queen’s passing was a sombre and respectful occasion. Its significance to the Corps as a whole was certainly not lost on the detachment, even if the reason for the mission wasn’t necessarily revealed until after the fact. Lt. Pieterse summarises it best:

“Coming to the realisation that we would be the first battery to fire in honour of the Queen and soon to be King was very exciting. Being able to give our Captain-General a proper send-off brought some much needed morale to what was an otherwise sombre occasion.”



2 Alpha Gun pay their respects following the mission. Credit: 8/12 Regt

2023

The year began with stark reminders of the unresolved issues of 2022. The war in Ukraine continued on, world tensions with China escalated following the discovery of spy balloons in the US and supply chain issues continued to harangue citizens with the ever rising cost of living. The possibility of war with China was on everyone's minds as rumours continued to elude to conflict in 2027, however nothing solid beyond here say had made its rounds across office chatter. Nonetheless this possibility was at the forefront of planning and the design of training programmes across the 1st Brigade.

This year represented the start of the 1st Brigade's decision to move into Littoral operations, marking a change in the conduct of training. This decision followed after The Brigade Commander, Brigadier Foxall, visited 8/12 in March to discuss the future of Army. The Brigade Commander wanted to make it clear, in no uncertain terms, that Australia was entering into hostilities with China and those hostilities would be taking place in the Indo Pacific Region by 2027. The Defence Strategic Review, spearheaded by the Albanese Government, would pave the way for Army to achieve its capability goals.

It was a strange briefing to sit in on. The Brigade Commander rarely came down to talk to troops, and yet here he was. The air was thick with tension following this news, and mixed feelings of preparedness and wondering what the future may hold took the room. Army committed itself to raising 20,000 more troops, offered retention bonuses and put into place more support for families and welfare. This was happening.

The Defence Strategic Review planned for massive changes across Army, but in Darwin specifically it would invest heavily in infrastructure, as well as upgrades to Robertson Barracks. This included entirely new ports, launching points, renewable energy on base and more projects totalling in the range of billions of dollars.

It also put 8/12 squarely in the lime light to undergo significant changes as it trialled a complete restructure.

101 BTY collapsed its gun line, redistributing its gunners and equipment to 102 and 103. 101 BTY would retain its JFT's, using them instead as a brigade asset, specifically the Force Recon Battery, in a 1-year trial in order to assess its effectiveness in this new role. 103 BTY received two guns from 101 as well as two detachment's worth of members on the 26th April.

With the move into Littoral operations, brainstorming was underway on how to operate an M777 in an island-hopping scheme. Adding to the complexity, there was the additional goal of operating in a GPS-denied environment with as little electronic signature as possible. The training was set out to be complex, unproven and completely experimental. Previous iterations of 103 Battery had brainstormed littoral operations, but the records were lost, leaving the current battery to start from scratch.

There was a huge year ahead. And lots to get done.

The regiment hit the ground running and as part of the high tempo, 103 BTY lead the regiment in upskilling all soldiers on every existing weapon system available to gunners. 103 JNCOs instructed courses on all small arms from SL40, 84mm, 66mm, MAG58 and 9mm in March, culminating in qualifying practices in KFTA for the entire regiment. Newer 103 members also attended upskilling courses such as driving qualifications and advanced guns.

Hardly a soul could be seen at the battery during this time. With courses galore and training opportunities it was a rocky and difficult start of the year for any members who were already fully qualified. For JNCOs in the battery it was a momentously difficult time.

Operation Kudu

The moment the work year began almost half of the Junior and Senior NCOs of 103 BTY were immediately committed to Operation Kudu with 5 RAR. The Operation saw members deploy to the UK as part of the ADF's commitment to the training of armed forces of Ukraine recruits. The 103 members joined 5 RAR in forming a contingent of up to 70 Australian troops to assist with the UK-led operation, alongside partner nations. The goal of Operation Kudu was to build additional capacity for Ukraine to defend their homeland, focussing heavily on infantry minor tactics in urban and wooded environments.

The pre-deployment process for attached 103 members was fraught with unnecessary levels of preparation, members often citing the OC's decision to spray paint everything from insignias on uniforms to the frames of ballistic eyewear, with no rhyme or reason beyond being told to do it. More controversially members were asked to fork out hundreds of dollars for fixed blade knives from civilian retailers, further adding to the confusion. Water bottles, uniforms, pouches, nothing was safe from the spray paint treatment. It was clear the OC had become over-excited.

The rotation committed the Juniors and Seniors for 3 months, becoming immersed in a complex and high-paced training environment from the get-go. They would take a leading role within large sections of Ukrainians, teaching them everything from basic soldier skills to trench warfare. It was a unique and challenging environment, as just weeks prior to attending the course,

Meanwhile, back at the Battery, things were heating up in June as 8/12 hosted a Regiment Week for their 50th birthday. This included a Gun Salute for the King's Birthday, PT competition, Mils Skills Competition as well as a Regiment Ball. The competitions attracted the fittest and toughest members across the regiment. Battery teams duked it out over the events, including max deadlifts, leg-killing circuits and even a BFA run. Team 3 took out the overall win, which of course was from 103!



Exercise Pred Run

Exercise Predator Run was extremely ambitious, with units planned to be staging out of Howard Springs, Larrakeyah, the common user facility at East Arm and 5 RAR. 103 was just a small cog in a very large machine that included involvement from the US Marines as well as the Pilipino and Malaysian Armies. It was also the time for 8/12 to come forward and prove that they could perform in a Littoral environment, just 7 months after the Brigade Commander's visit.

In the lead up to Ex Pred Run, 103 Battery was called upon to be the guinea pig as the battery to deploy onto an island. This time was fraught with uncertainty, dates kept getting pushed left and right and the procedure for actually deploying was still to be determined. In the end, civilian barges, the *Jane Virgo* and the *Cooma Cooma* were contracted to act as stand-ins for the lack of amphibious vehicles. 102 BTY experimented with using the PMV and Manitou as Gun Tractors to manoeuvre the guns onto the barges.

Tape was marked out across the Regiment and 103 drivers practiced meticulously as they backed guns onto the mock-up ships, countless meetings were called to discuss the implementation of littoral operations and the fight for information was an uphill battle. Right up to the start date of the exercise there was little to no information available about how the guns were actually going to operate. Plans were formed, scrapped and replanned in the space of mere hours.

At the mercy of Brigade, it was decided that the guns were to deploy to Melville Island. Room on the barges became an issue as the HX-77 and the M777 were exceedingly large on such small scale barges. 103 Battery weren't the only ones destined to deploy on the island, however, and spots on the larger barges were filling up quick. The Battery had to be prepared to deploy using only a troop variant PMV, in case space wasn't going to be available. To get around this, it was decided that a Tilly would be used.

The Gunline postured within 5 RAR's compound during the lead up to the deployment date, which made for a very uneventful start to a complex and ever evolving exercise. Multiple units made their way to the island whilst 103 Battery waited for their scheduled date to move out on the barge, but it never came to be – as disaster struck when a USMC Osprey crashed onto Melville Island. The aircraft was carrying 23 US Marines, of which three were killed at the crash scene. Another five were flown to hospital in critical condition.

This postponed the exercise and plans were once again changed as the safety aspect was urgently reassessed. It was quickly decided to retrieve the units that were deployed on the island in order to achieve training outcomes in a more controlled environment. As a part of this reassessment the 103rd Battery boarded the Cooma Cooma with the guns for a local circuit before redeploying in the Darwin Area and continuing on to the Mount Bunday Training Area.

Once firm on the ground in Bunday, the battery could finally shine and do what they did best – gunnery. Advanced practices occurred, culminating in the opportunity for the gunline to experience the effects of danger close in the pits. The gunline made the most of a low round allocation.

Freedom of Entry

8/12 Regiment was proud to be invited to march through the streets of Palmerston City in a Freedom of Entry ceremony, the first one since their arrival 20 years or so years ago. On the occasion, Mayor of the City of Palmerston, Athina Pascoe-Bell said the following:

“Whereas many of our citizens have served with pride in your distinguished regiment which, by its great achievements in times of peace and war, has built up honourable traditions.”

The mayor and aldermen of Palmerston, at a meeting of council on the 12th day of January 2016 have resolved, in appreciation of your great services of our sovereign, our country and city, to confer upon the 8th/12th Regiment, royal Australian artillery by the deed and in perpetuity, the privilege, honour and distinction of the freedom of the city

With the right of entry on ceremonial occasions in full panoply with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, drums beating, bands playing and the banner flying that the common seal of the council be affixed to such deed.”

The occasion called for extensive and rigorous practice, attracting the attention of local news and media teams across the NT. 8/12 was also pleased to receive MAJ GEN (ret) Craig Furini as a distinguished guest, who was ex CO of 8/12 as well as a fervent fan of 103, having been its BC 20 years prior.



Gunner Bear

Ever busy, the battery proceeded directly into collecting funds for 2023's Gunner Bear efforts, spreading out across the Darwin area, ready to once again advocate for funding for the children's hospital. The effort began on the 30th SEP with members of the regiment setting up a display at the Darwin Waterfront, alongside an obstacle course and fun activities for the whole family, including face painting, a sausage sizzle and close-up tours of the Hawkei PMV-L.

103 Battery participated in one leg of the gun push, from Jape Homemaker Village to Casuarina Shopping Centre with another successful year.





Chapter 6: 103 Forever

In closing, this chapter aims to provide readers with further context into the battery's achievements, significant people and awards.

This information was procured through extensive research, however it is still incomplete. Some records have been lost over the years, some events were deemed too mundane to write down and memories fade. If you or someone you know might be able to contribute to this chapter, or any chapter in this edition, please get in contact so we can update the information in future editions. It is my hope that this writing can provide a reliable resource to the battery members past and present.

Although the previous iterations of "103" are not directly related to the 103rd Battery of the present day, it's undeniable that the record of service of all those who share our name since the birth of the sphinx in 1916 justifies the battery of today to have immense pride in the history that has been created. We perpetuate the names of those who served and in doing so their memory lives on forevermore. We, the 103rd, are but one brush stroke in the canvas that is the history of the Royal Australian Artillery and as we have observed 100 years of 103, 150 years of the RAA, Lest We Forget those whose name we share.

The Women of the 103rd Battery

Saint Barbara has been the patron saint of Artillery since the 17th Century and is invoked by lightning strikes and accidents involving gunpowder. For her popularity surrounding lines of work involving sudden death her worship is also witnessed by tunnelers, miners and other jobs involved with explosives. A common practice at the opening of a mine was to dedicate a shrine to St Barbara at the commencement of the first tunnel, but this has since fallen out of favour. Most of Saint Barbara's worship has taken a behind the scenes step as the world becomes more modernised and less concerned with the occult or supernatural.

This is not to say that her place in Artillery is utterly irrelevant, because the 103rd Battery has observed many St Barbara's Day celebrations across the decades, oftentimes involving a day of games and competitions between batteries, regiments or sometimes the local CER unit (who shares the same patron saint). St Barbara, above all, serves to protect her subjects who invoke her.

The Royal Australian Artillery is a proud corps steeped in mythology and long-standing traditions which over time have shaped the culture and identity of the Corps itself. Gunners from across the centuries have revered women like Saint Barbara and have sought safety in the support of their partners. Across the decades, women have been among the battery's biggest supporters and now, in more recent times, some of its hardest workers. Notable women over the years of the battery's long standing history have been a part of the lives of some of its most successful members.

Regardless of attitudes towards women in defence, many women have joined the ranks of the 103rd Battery in recent years, which has contributed greatly towards the culture and has directly facilitated the betterment of the battery. Employing women in the battery has helped to discard the rhetoric of gender equality by giving them the opportunity to prove their value through hard work and commitment. Where previously women's place in ADF and in combat roles have been called into doubt, the women of the 103rd Battery continuously prove that notion wrong, giving merit to the arguments and strategies emplaced by defence's prioritising of the employment of women in 2011.

From a personal standpoint, the women I have worked with in the 103rd Battery over the course of my service have been among the most switched and hardest workers. It's a shame sometimes to see the legitimacy of their service called into question by people online or other members of defence. I've thankfully been in just long enough to witness attitudes towards women in artillery shift in a more positive direction over the years. I've seen an all-male gunline and I've been part of a detachment with women gunners. There's very little disruption to daily operations, if any at all. The only extra consideration it takes to operate with women on the gun line is that they'll want to fight you if you take the rammer from them.

Whilst historically speaking there is little to demonstrate on women's involvement in the 103rd Battery's history its notable to

mention that these are historic times. Prior to the last 20 years there have never been fully employed women on the 103rd Battery's gun line and it is a truly significant event in the history of the battery and it's their hard work that's inspired me to write this section. Throughout this piece we will meet some of the women that have been behind us, supporting us before we talk about those who now beside us.

Mrs. Denise Maureen Badcoe was the wife of esteemed Victoria Cross Recipient and ex BK of 103 Battery Major Peter Badcoe, who was killed in action during the Vietnam War. She married Peter on the 26th May 1956 in Manly of New South Wales during his posting at Puckapunyal where he trained national servicemen. She followed him through every step of his military career, even going as far as to stay in Camp Terendak, Malaya to be close to him. They had three daughters, Carey, Kim and Susanne. In 1962, during her stay in Malaya, she became the only woman to participate in the Singapore Inter-Club Open Pistol Championships.

Denise was the only person Peter confided in and it is of no doubt that her support as a spouse directly supported his exemplary service. On the 7th April 1967 Peter wrote his last letter to Denise, the day he died.

In 1968 she would, alongside their three children receive her husband's posthumous Victoria Cross in Government House. She was employed by the Australian National University and following her husband's death she sought a life in Canberra to facilitate their family's educational prospects. She selflessly presented his decorations to the Australian War

Memorial, an action which she had every right not to do would have directly impacted how we remember him today.



Figure 1 Kim 8, Susanne 7 and Kerry 10 look proudly at the VC won by their father Major Peter Badcoe. Their Mother, Mrs Denise Badcoe received it in Government House. Credit: Trove.

Similarly, Sir Joseph John Talbot Hobbs, who commanded the AIF's Artillery in the 1st Division in 1914, was survived by his wife Edith Ann and his children. Sir Hobbs and his wife Edith were both hard workers who contributed greatly to the development of Western Australia, sought proper recognition of soldier's service and were routinely involved with the 103rd Battery's monthly gatherings throughout the 1930's. As an avid supporter of her husband's hard work, she too supported the battery's gatherings.



Figure 3 GNR Hladyszew conducts a live fire range practice..

For the women of today, being a part of the bigger picture and a desire for philanthropy are a driving force for joining according to Artillery Command Systems Operator Gunner Georgia Hladyszew. GNR Hladyszew posted to the 103rd Battery this year after secondment to the 53rd Battery. Excited for the next part of her journey at 8/12 Regiment, GNR Hladyszew sought challenging experiences in working with firing data to create a ballistic solution.

Her experience within the RAA has taught her that she's extremely capable of operating with grace under pressure, which is essential to the Command Post's functions. She continues to be an asset to the battery and the RAA with her experience of firing the battery as a CPO, firing the gun as a gun number and shooting a live mission as a JFT makes her one of the most technically well-rounded gunners in the RAA to date. As she looks to her future in Army she sees herself becoming one of the first female ACSO Bombardiers and encourages any women interested in army to just go for it – you won't know it's for you if you don't try.

To Gunner Rhianna Gardener, holding yourself to a higher standard and striving to be a better soldier is essential to women's success in army, saying that its not enough to use your gender as an excuse to not get involved in something difficult or challenging. As a Gun Number, GNR Gardener has a role that has a reputation for being physically demanding, so she's unfortunately become used to the idea of being doubted in her ability. She maintains that she because of the physicality of her job she's learnt there's always another 10% in the tank and remarks that because of her service with the 103rd Battery that her values and how she holds herself

has changed over time and now feels she can stand tall and speak without fear or hesitation. Despite all this, she calls to attention the doubt she experienced from friends and family didn't necessarily end when she joined the military.

Like many women in army, GNR Gardener found it at times mentally exhausting to overcome cultural shortfalls. Her hope for the future of the RAA is that more women can help shape the culture and that it would be ideal to see more women employed within the battery. Private Caitlyn Ristau-Boone, a Clerk for the 103rd Battery for over 2 years, mentioned that female bombardiers would be important for the RAA as it would give women a role model to look up to and a goal to strive for.

When PTE Ristau-Boone posted to the 103rd Battery in 2020 it would've been difficult to integrate with the ORs had it not been for the presence of other women in the battery. Due to the individualistic and officer-centric nature of her role as a clerk, it was important to build rapport with the people she was actually serving and so she made it a priority to familiarise herself with the operation of the M777A2 and M2A2 to better understand the daily operations of the battery. In her efforts she attended the M777A2 Ammunition Number course to learn the fundamentals of gunnery which enabled her to assist detachments out field as well as fire a live mortar mission as a JFT. Her experience and understanding of the battery across all levels allowed her to greatly inform battery operations as well as assist in the development of planning on operations such as COVID-Assist.

But this was not without challenges, due to her being a Private she had to learn to communicate effectively with people several echelons above her and her young age at times spurred people to call her advice into question. During her time in Army she has learnt that it's all about character and that you have to mature quickly if you are to be working within the regimental structure. People are out to get you and even if baseless rumours fly you have to brush it off and keep moving forward, because your character

will inform others of who you are. With this mindset she quickly established herself as a reliable source and was highly sought after and now looks forward to applying the same learning principles to her new position in the Combat Service Support headquarters in 8/12 Regiment.



Whilst PTE Ristau-Boone has, at times, had her age become a factor in first impressions, Gunner Rebecca Sinz routinely keeps up with people 10 years her junior. As a Gun Number she has experienced her fair share of injuries and has faced constant doubt about her conviction to the role, oftentimes being asked if she knew what she was getting herself into from the recruiting stage up. Despite this she has been able to bounce back from various downgrades and injuries by putting her mind on what she needed to achieve to get herself across the line. During her four years in the 103rd Battery she feels she's become more resilient and isn't so concerned about the little things in life, meaning she's stronger – both physically and within herself.

After finding her purpose on the gun line GNR Sinz has become well known as a favourable rammer who's long since cast aside the chains of retail. Her hard work has helped her become qualified in 40M, HX77, Hawkei and even Subject One for Corporal, setting her up to one day become the first female Gunline Bombardier in the history of the 103rd Battery – a goal of hers. Despite this, she is accredited as the longest serving woman in the 103rd Battery's history at four years.



Figure 56. GNR Sinz rams with a US Marine of Kilo Battery. Koolendong 2020. Credit; Rebecca Sinz.



Gunnery is a testing and challenging job and to ex Gun Number Isabelle Close she looks fondly at the times she'd spent in the 103rd, notably when you were so exhausted that you and the detachment would laugh at just about anything. She became inspired to join after a life event had broken a lot of her own self confidence and sought the military experience to re-establish her foundations again. She wasn't one to shy away from the physical element of gunnery despite her small frame and her famously positive attitude sustained the people around her. In pursuit of her lifelong dream of being a Paramedic she was able to use her experience in the battery as a spring board to propel herself in the right direction.

Artillery is heavily regimented and at times is resistant to change, which made Gunner Close's experience joining all the more intimidating and the prospect of stepping into a male dominated field made her hesitant. After doing some research and seeing a fire mission online with all the energy, drive and motivation of the gunners she became inspired. At first glance Gunner Close is small and wiry and so it was important to her on her posting to Darwin that she proved she was just as capable as everyone else and shared the same reasons for showing up to work every day.

The RAA has an old fashioned way of doing things and the relevance of its methods in today's army is questionable. Its culture is not without flaws and unfortunately for members like GNR Close it is at times hostile and unwelcoming. GNR Close urges women interested in Defence to make sure the role they're researching is a good fit, because she feels if she had joined another role she very well could still be serving. Gunners don't always leave because of the physical nature.



*Figure 57. GNR Close brings the gun into action. Credit: Isabelle Close.
(Below, GNR Close digs in the spades).*



In closing, the RAA has accepted women into their ranks since the opening of combat roles to women in 2011 and to date only three women are still serving within the ranks of 103, seeing most women move on due to cultural or personal concerns. Significant strides have been made in the development of the RAA's culture in recent years, but that road is very much still being paved as we try to walk it and it will still be quite some time before we as a society can comfortably accept women in these roles. Individual attitudes within the ranks of the RAA show that members wholeheartedly accept women provided they can perform the job, but there will always be someone to provide underhanded comments and resist the change the RAA is destined for. Bringing women into the RAA was always going to be difficult, its proving to be a motion that has been fraught with risk and experimentation, but through persistence and acceptance the girls of gunnery have a foundation that can steadily grow over the years. Its by no means perfect and it requires a lot of work, but it's a foundation that needs a lady's hand to shape and build. Its with hope that the future of the RAA will be steady enough to see the range of firsts its so eagerly working towards. First woman Battery Commander, first woman Number One, first woman Battery Sergeant Major and its my personal hope as author of this work that the shifts in attitudes I've witnessed in my own service continue to trend in the right direction. I hope to one day see an environment that facilitates and navigates the world of the girls of gunnery sincerely and effortlessly.



Figure 58. GNR T McRae. Gunline. 2020-2022

Figure 59. GNR I Close. Gunline. 2018-2021





Figure 1. GNR R Gardener. Gunline. 2018 - Present.

Battery Sergeant Majors

An attempt at a complete list

Assumptions

During this investigation I have made the assumption that the aforementioned BSM's, unless stated otherwise by evidence, have served in the battery for a consecutive period of no more than two years. The names mentioned from the 1960's onwards were confirmed by BSM boards in the battery.

103rd Howitzer Battery AIF

1916-1918

1918-1919

103rd Field (Howtizer) Battery of the Citizen Military Forces

1920-1922

1922-1924

1924-1926

1926-1928

1928-1930 *WO2 R. Bales*

1930-1932 *WO2 Hugget*

1932-1934

1934-1936

1936-1938

1938-1940 *WO2 F. Self*

1940-1941

103rd Anti Aircraft Battery

1954-1956

1956-1957

103rd Field Battery

1960-1961 *WO2 D. Matthews*

1961-1964 *WO2 N. O'Brian*

1965-1966 *WO2 K. Kennedy*

1966-1967 *WO2 B. Taylor*

103rd Medium Battery ARA

1967-1968	WO2 W. Gallagher
1968-1969	WO2 F. Buxton
1969-1970	WO2 J Bennet-Burleigh
1970-1971	WO2 K. Borgess
1971-1974	WO2 R. Dial
1974-1975	WO2 W. McMillan
1975-1976	WO2 A. Sheridan
1976-1978	WO2 J. Downes
1979-1980	WO2 O. Bell
1981 (JAN-APR)	WO2 J. Mottershead
1981-1982	WO2 B. Johnston
1983-1984	WO2 B. Stafford
1984-1986	WO2 F. Gebbet
1986-1987x	WO2 P. Maher M. M.
1987-1989x	WO2 W. May
1990-1991	WO2 K. Kerley
1992-1993	WO2 P. Gribble
1993-199	WO2 G. Shaun
1997-1998	WO2 M. Blaxland
1999-2000	WO2 G. Attwater
2000-2000	WO2 M. Balfe
2001-2002	WO2 M. J. Johnson
2003-2004	WO2 P. M. Robertson
2005-2005	WO2 C. W. Mayfield
2006-2007	WO2 C. A. Richards
2008-2008	WO2 B. R. McIntyre
2009-2010	WO2 D. J. Warren
2011-2011	WO2 P. R. Clemence

103rd Battery

2012-2012	WO2 M. Kipa
2013-2014	WO2 C. J. Leechman
2015-2015	WO2 P. J. Egart
2016-2016	WO2 B. J. Gilbert
2017-2017	WO2 S. J. D. Jolley
2018-2018	WO2 B.A. Brown
2019-2020	WO2 J. T. Wilson
2021-2022	<i>WO2 M. Nipperess</i>
2022-	<i>WO2 S. Fitzgerald</i>

Battery Commanders

An attempt at a complete list

Assumptions

During this investigation I have made the assumption that the aforementioned BC's, unless stated otherwise by evidence, have served in the battery for a consecutive period of no more than two years. The names mentioned after 1960 were confirmed by BC's boards in the battery.

103rd Howitzer Battery A.I.F.

1916-1917	MAJ A. H. K. Jopp
1917-1919x	MAJ P. E. Cooperx

103rd Field (Howtizer) Battery of the Citizen Military Forces

1920-1922	MAJ J. E. Mitchell(?)
1922-1924	
1924-1926	
1926-1928	MAJ S.F. Rowell
1928-1930	MAJ Finlayx
1930-1932	MAJ A. Watts (?)
1932-1934	
1934-1936	
1936-1938	
1938-1940	CAPT. A. E. Montefiore
1940-1941	

103rd Anti Aircraft Battery

1953-1954	CAPT F. Mitchell
1954-1956	
1956-1957	

103rd Field Battery

1960-1961	MAJ J. A. Loveday
1961-1963	MAJ J. R. Salmonx
1963-1964	MAJ W. J. Slocombx
1964-1965	MAJ T. J. Hanagan
1965-1966	MAJ R.N. Gair
1966-1967	MAJ M.E.P. Burge

103rd Medium Battery ARA

1967-1968	MAJ R. B. Knight
1969-1969	MAJ R.K.S. Ross
1970-1971	MAJ P.S. Ratcliff
1971-1972	MAJ D.J. Solomons
1972-1973	MAJ D.M. Tait
1974-1974	MAJ B.J. Armour
1975-1975	MAJ J.P. Stevens
1976-1977	MAJ R.A.M. Lenard
1978-1979	MAJ D.J Barrow
1980-1980	MAJ V.J. Gibbons
1981-1981	MAJ A.H. Rankinex
1982-1982	MAJ D.V. Jonesx
1983-1984	MAJ V.H. Williams
1985-1985	MAJ J.H. Hardinx
1985-1986	MAJ T.W. Vercoe
1987-1988	MAJ D.R. Daviesx
1989-1990	MAJ H.J. Mueller
1991-1992	MAJ P.R. Maw
1993-1993	MAJ J.P.C. Black
1994-1995	MAJ K.S. Delaney
1996-1997	MAJ P.C. Gates
1998-1999	MAJ G.W. Finney
2000-2001	MAJ C.D. Furini
2002-2003	MAJ A.M. Haebich
2004-2005	MAJ S.A. Jenkins
2006-2007	MAJ J. Kerr
2008-2009	MAJ D.J. Patterson
2010-2010	MAJ S.J. Hunter
2011-2012	MAJ I.C. Fletcher

103rd Battery

2013-2013	MAJ B.C. Gray
2014-2014	MAJ W.G. Cooper
2015-2015	MAJ N.P. Cooper
2016-2017	MAJ J.M. Boyd
2018-2018	MAJ M.A.F. Williams
2019-2020	MAJ J. Beale
2021-2021	MAJ S. Watts
2022-	MAJ J. Oates

Those Who Paid the Ultimate Sacrifice

World War I 1914-1918

<i>Date</i>	<i>Service No.</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Cause of Death</i>
12 MAY 1916	6060	DVR	P Reynolds	Illness
11 JUN 1916	5736	GNR	J F Berry	4.2" Shell
28 JUN 1916	1639	SGT	D Fraser	Rifle Bullet
7 AUG 1916	955	GNR	A R Tempany	5.9" Shell
7 AUG 1916	3080	GNR	N.C Sherard	5.9" Shell
7 AUG 1916	5169	GNR	H G Bennet	5.9" Shell
8 AUG 1916	Omitted	2 nd LT	H.P Hare	DOW
24 FEB 1917	2379	GNR	R O Brand	Illness
14 SEP 1917	748	BDR	T Seely	KIA
14 SEP 1917	28179	GNR	A Giddings	KIA
25 AUG 1917	22916	GNR	R F Carr	Unknown

25 AUG 1917	3752	GNR	L J Norton	KIA
25 AUG 1917	1209	GNR	A Peake	KIA
25 SEP 1917	15707	GNR	F C Gale	DOW
25 SEP 1917	993	GNR	C G Dolg	DOW
25 SEPT 1917	22916	GNR	F R Cain	KIA
30 SEP 1917	31925	GNR	Z Geraghty	DOW
26 OCT 1917	1853	GNR	R F Cunningham	KIA
15 NOV 1917	2504	Fitter	E N Keeami	DOW
20 MAY 1918	5162	DVR	E J Holcombe	KIA
23 MAY 1918	3602	CPL	L C Bruce	KIA
26 MAY 1918	11435	BDR	J E Shields	KIA
26 MAY 1918	3932	GNR	A HH Waterfield	KIA
8 AUG 1918	3503	GNR	F J Smith	DOW

30 SEPT
1918

11131

GNR

A J Seage

KIA

Vietnam 1966 – 1967

No members died during their service in Vietnam, however many were wounded in a mortar attack preceding the Battle of Long Tan

3 MAY 1967	216150	GNR	C Chapman	WIA Mortar
17 AUG 1966	2782149	GNR	P C Norris	WIA Mortar
17 AUG 1966	200058	GNR	K Quinnelll	WIA Mortar

Other Noteworthy Deaths

4 FEB 2017	Unknown	GNR	M James	MVA
Late 1998	Unknown	GNR	A Jordan	MVA
1987	Unknown	CFN	G Cardwell	MVA

As far as records indicate, no further Killed In Actions are recorded as a part of the Battery's history. Please get in touch via email at hemi.ranui@gmail.com to update future editions.

Honours and Awards

The Great War

LT Arthur Smith

This officer has at all times shown the keenest devotion to duty and has displayed marked ability in carrying out his duties. He has done good work in connection with the recent operations around Ypres, particularly when his Battery Commander became a casualty. During operations he carried on until a new Battery Commander arrived. – Australian War Memorial Honours and Awards.

Distinguished Conduct Medal

SGT Francis Viney

“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. While he was firing his gun in support of an attack, several boxes of bombs close to the position were set on fire by a shell. He at once left the shelter of his gun pit, carried the burning bombs away and dropped them into a shell hole. His prompt and courageous action prevented the many casualties in his detachment, and set a fine example to his men.” – Australian War Memorial Honours and Awards

SGT Mauri de Scott

“At about 6pm on the night of 10th September 1917, near HOOGE the battery was being heavily shelled when a shell set the battery ammunition dump on fire. Sergeant Scott left cover and unaided worked for fifteen minutes before he finally succeeded in extinguishing the fire, his hands being burnt whilst so doing. The barrage at the time was exceedingly heavy. By this section Sergeant Scott saved what may have been a very dangerous situation and undoubtedly he saved many rounds of ammunition from destruction. His coolness and disregards for personal danger also set a splendid example to the personnel of the battery. Sergeant

Scott's general devotion to duty and gallant conduct have repeatedly been most marked." – Australian War Memorial Honours and Awards

Military Medal

GNR C.D. Bailey

Whilst acting as linesman and runner with Liaison Officer, Right Battalion, under very heavy shell and machinegun fire he kept communication going between Brigade HQ and the front line. On three successive occasions he ran back to Brigade HQ through a very heavy barrage, showing a total disregard of personal danger and his coolness and devotion to duty during the whole engagement were of the highest standard. – Australian War Memorial Honours and Awards

DVR H.L. Arthur

Distinguished and soldierly conduct in repairing lines often under severe shell fire during the whole of the operations. On August 1st he on many occasions carried messages through the heavy barrage of fire maintained by the enemy artillery, and succeeded in keeping up communication by this means when all other methods failed. – Australian War Memorial Honours and Awards.

GNR R.O. Brand

Distinguished and soldierly conduct in repairing lines often under severe shell fire during the whole of the operations. On August 1st he on many occasions carried messages through the heavy barrage of fire maintained by the enemy artillery, and succeeded in keeping up communication by this means when all other methods failed – Australian War Memorial

SGT. D.S. Fraser

During the whole of his 7 and a half months service at Anzac his work was characterised by enduring effort and excellence. During the Lone Pine section, regardless of heavy shelling and personal risk, he maintained communication between his battery commander and his gun line when all wires were cut. – Australian War Memorial

Military Cross

LT. G.M. Wallace

On the night of 29th/30th May 1917 at Ploegesteert the battery was under very heavy shell fire, two large ammunition dumps adjacent to the battery position was set on fire by hostile shells, commencing to burn fiercely and explode. This officer with Sergt Smith immediately left their cover and extinguished the dumps with water. They were under continuous shell fire throughout and in imminent danger from the exploding ammunition dumps. The gallant and timely action of this officer and NCO undoubtedly saved a large quantity of Artillery ammunition and furnished an inspiring and striking example to the men under their command. This officer has again rendered most gallant and helpful service with the artillery going forward with the infantry in their attack on the German lines south of Wessines on 7th June 1917. – Australian War Memorial

Belgian Croix De Guerre

MAJ P.E. Cooper

For the period 12th April till 3rd October. For gallantry and devotion to duty while in action on the Ahiens Front during the above mentioned period. This officer has always displayed conspicuous ability in carrying out his duties as Battery Commander and in any other duty to which he has been detailed. – Australian War Memorial.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL
Figure 1EN Route to Egypt, P.E. Cooper second row, second from right.

A03377

Vietnam

Military Cross

LT. Michael Langley

“Lieutenant Michael Langley, having previously served as an officer in the Royal Artillery, was commissioned into the Royal Australian Artillery on 28th June 1965, as a member of 1st Field Regiment. On 21st February 1967, Lieutenant Langley was the forward observer with B Company, 5th Battalion, The

Royal Australian Regiment, during Operation Renmark. Near the village of Long My, at 1411 hours, the company headquarters group became caught in an enemy minefield and at least two mines were detonated. The whole of the command element of the company was included in the casualties, of whom nine died and a further twenty were wounded

Placing his own party of men in a safe place, Lieutenant Langley immediately moved forward into the minefield. With complete disregard for his own safety, he rendered first aid to the injured and arranged their subsequent evacuation by helicopter. He then took command of the remnants of the company, organised the local defence of their position and successfully maintained 'morale and fighting spirit. He remained in command of B Company until 1107 hours on the following day when the company was able to rejoin battalion headquarters. Lieutenant Langley, by his immediate action was able to steady the survivors at a critical moment and prevent further casualties occurring. His complete disregard for his own safety and his care for the wounded soldiers displayed a standard of calmness and bravery that reflects great credit upon himself, his Regiment, and the Australian Regular Army.” – The London Gazette Friday 24th November 1967 page 12979 position 2.



Figure 1 CAPT Michael Lanlgey's Portrait. Courtesy of 5RAR

Victoria Cross

Major Peter Badcoe (ex BK of 103 Battery)

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased on the advice of Her Majesty's Australian Ministers to approve the posthumous award of the VICTORIA CROSS to: Major PETER JOHN BADCOE (41400), Royal Australian Infantry Corps.

41400 Major PETER JOHN BADCOE was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Australian Staff Corps in December 1952. He was allotted to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery in which he served in a number of Regimental and Staff postings until August 1965. He then transferred to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and joined the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam in August 1966. He was posted as Sector Operations Officer in Thua Thien Province, South Vietnam.

On 23rd February 1967 he was acting as an Advisor to a Regional Force Company in support of a Sector operation in Phu Thu District. He monitored a radio transmission which stated that the Subsector Adviser, a United States Army Officer, had been killed and that his body was within 50 metres of an enemy machine gun position ; further, the United States Medical Adviser had been wounded and was in immediate danger from the enemy. Major BADCOE with complete disregard for his own safety moved alone across 600 metres of fire-swept ground and reached the wounded Adviser, attended to him and ensured his future safety. He then organised a force of one platoon and led them towards the enemy post. His personal leadership, words of encouragement, and actions in the face of hostile enemy fire forced the platoon to successfully assault the enemy position and capture it, where he personally killed the machine gunners directly in front of him. He then picked up the body of the dead officer and ran back to the Command post over open ground still covered by enemy fire. On 7th March 1967, at approximately 0645 hours, the Sector Reaction Company was deployed



to Quang Dien Subsector to counter an attack by the Viet Cong on the Headquarters. Major BADCOE left the Command group after their vehicle broke down and a United States Officer was killed ; he joined the Company Headquarters and personally led the company in an attack over open terrain to assault and capture a heavily defended enemy position. In the face of certain death and heavy losses his personal courage and leadership turned certain defeat into victory and prevented the enemy from capturing the District Headquarters.

On 7th April 1967, on an operation in Huong Tra District, Major BADCOE was with the 1st A.R.V.N. Division Reaction Company and some armoured personnel carriers. During the move forward to an objective the company came under heavy small arms fire and withdrew to a cemetery for cover, this left Major BADCOE and his radio operator about 50 metres in front of the leading elements, under heavy mortar fire. Seeing this withdrawal, Major BADCOE ran back to them, moved amongst them and by encouragement and example got them moving forward again. He then set out in front of the company to lead them on; the company stopped again under heavy fire but Major BADCOE continued on to cover and prepared to throw grenades, when he rose to throw, his radio operator pulled him down as heavy small arms fire was being brought to bear on them; he later got up again to throw a grenade and was hit and killed by a burst of machine gun fire. Soon after, friendly artillery fire was called in and the position was assaulted and captured.

Major BADCOE'S conspicuous gallantry and leadership on all these occasions was an inspiration to all, each action, ultimately, was successful, due entirely to his efforts, the final one ending in his death. His valour and leadership were in the highest traditions of the military profession and the Australian Regular Army.” – The London Gazette 17 October 1967 on page 11273 at position 1

Afghanistan

BDR Dave Robertson MG

“David started the first of his two deployments to Afghanistan in October 2010. A member of the Royal Australian Artillery, he served as a Joint Fires Officer, accompanying Australian Operational Mentoring Liason Team members on patrol in the Tangi Valley. On 20 March 2011, his patrol came under enemy fire while patrolling through a village. Despite being exposed to fire himself, David called in mortar fire against two insurgent machine gun positions. He was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his actions on that day.” – Shrine of Remembrance.org

He was awarded the MG at government house in South Australia on the 4th September 2012.

Although it's understood that the soon to be SGT Robertson was serving with 115 BTY during the time he performed the actions that earned him the MG he was working at 102 BTY when he was presented with the medal. Prior to all of this, the majority of SGT Robertson's career had been spent in 103 Battery.

This is not to snatch an achievement from 102's jaws, wherever our Gunners may go we support their accomplishments as we watch their careers with great interest. In only the utmost respect do we record his actions in these pages as we know his career in 8/12 Regt began at 103 Battery.

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Figure 1 The 103rd Battery, 8/12 REGT, RAA with Kilo Battery, MRF-D, USMC exchange gifts at the 103rd Battery's gun bays. Original photo. 2020. Thank you for reading!

Making Contributions to Future Editions

Please get in touch!

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EGYPT FRANCE MALAYA VIETNAM TIMOR IRAQ SOLOMON ISLANDS AFGHANISTAN

Tel el Kabir hosted the establishment of the first AIF and with it the birth of many Australian units that persist to this day.

One such unit was the 103rd Battery.

This unassuming howitzer battery made of eager Australian volunteers would participate in some of the bloodiest battles of the Great War and fire 42,000 rounds in support of Australian Troops in that conflict alone.

This battery has worked tirelessly behind the scenes in some of the most well known battles in Australian history. They participated in the 100 Days Offensive, Battle of Long Tan and fired countless missions in Afghanistan, oftentimes appearing as a mere footnote.

